Saturday March 15 1997

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

46,812

Why we believe in the unbelievable?

Mind over matter of fact

Analysis, page 2

Bonus time in the City

Greed is back

The Week, page 17

Rugby Union

England eclipses the old stagers

Sport, page 23

Flight of the lucky few

Death and panic on Tirana streets

John Sweeney in Tirana and Ian Black in London

HUNDREDS of frightened westerners were evacuated under fire from Albania yesterday as anarchy gripped the country, heavily armed gunmen roamed the streets of the capital Tirana, and a beleaguered President Sali Berisha clung desperately to power.

The United States suspended its rescue operations after a missile was aimed at a Marine Cobra escorting transport helicopters. Italian forces, who also came under small arms fire, rescued 500 people, including 65 exhausted Britons taken off the beach at the Adriatic port of Durres, by landing craft to a warship en route for Brindisi.

Two British ships, HMS Birmingham and HMS Exeter, were standing by and a small unit of British troops was deployed to advise ambassador Andrew Tesoriere, the Ministry of Defence said. German soldiers exchanged fire with local gunmen during their rescue mission.

Albanians took to the sea in a ramshackle flotilla of rusting gunboats and fishing vessels. The United Nations warned Italy and Greece of a possible flood of refugees as the slide to chaos continued and European governments floundered about how to respond to the continent's worst crisis since the Bosnian war.

Three people, including a girl, aged four, and a boy, aged 10, were killed and 72 injured by stray bullets in overnight incidents in Tirana.

Franz Vranitzky, mission head for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, called for an international police force to restore order, but governments made clear they had no appetite for military intervention.

"The Albanians have to sort out their own problems first and foremost and they are dismally failing to do so," said the Foreign Office minister, Sir Nicholas Bonsor. "It is quite clear that there is no military force, no police force, no law and order in the country at the moment and it is unrealistic to expect the international community to go in and establish such a force."

Speaking after a meeting with Albanian government representatives aboard the Italian warship Aliseo, Mr Vranitzky, the former Austrian chancellor, said a police operation should be launched by a "coalition of those willing" to help.

British diplomats said humanitarian aid could be forthcoming but only if the situation stabilised. European Union foreign ministers, including Malcolm Rikfind, are to discuss the crisis in the Dutch town of Apeldoorn today.

Oblivious to the intricacies of international diplomacy, Tirana was a city in a ghastly frenzy yesterday, almost literally fizzing with fear. People's faces were lined with tension; every train of thought interrupted by yet another long burst of gunfire, sometimes into the air, sometimes not.

Around noon, rumours began to sweep the capital that President Sali Berisha had fled the country. These rumours were reported as such on the BBC but were later denied by the government-controlled media. Mr Berisha's wife and children fled to Italy on Thursday.

To ram home the point, an armed convoy circled Skanderbeg Square in the heart of Tirana around 3.30pm, an unconvincing display of force by Shik, the secret police loyal to Mr Berisha.

It was an ugly sight, a crocodile of vehicles led by two motorbikes, then two olive-green armed personnel carriers and a line of 13 police vans and Mercedes. Rifles and submachine guns bristled from the windows of each vehicle. Through the sunroof of one blue police van a sniper studied hurrying passers-by.

As the convoy passed the Albanian tourism ministry in the corner of the square, the Shik fired their Kalashnikovs into the air in a terrifying display of malice.

Rumours that Mr Berisha

Turn to page 3, column 1

Leader comment, page 8;
Martin Woollacott, page 9

A desperate Albanian appeals to soldiers during an Italian helicopter airlift from Tirana PHOTOGRAPH: PETR JOSEK

Major's poll vision soured by squabbling

Michael White and Ewen MacAskill

JOHN Major's 11th hour attempt to stave off election defeat with his vision of a "People's Britain" was drowned out last night by the noise of Conservative MPs squabbling over the Tory leadership contest which would follow a Labour victory.

As Tory activists met in Bath for a pre-election rally, a plea by the former minister, Edwina Currie, for Mr Major to "please, don't hang around" as party leader if he loses power on May 1 completely overshadowed carefully arranged plans to get the latest relaunch rolling.

The Prime Minister will today unveil the Tory campaign slogan — "You can only be sure with the Conservatives" — in a speech intended to persuade defecting voters that Labour would rapidly ruin all the painfully-won economic gains of the past 18 years.

"Of course Labour could destroy that achievement in five years, indeed looking at their plans, they could do it in five months," the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, said in Bath last night.

The stability slogan has been market-tested by the Tories as a vote-winner, but stability was not evident in the Conservative ranks yesterday.

Mrs Currie's damning remarks about the need for a quick post-election leadership contest amounted to a public admission of what most Tory MPs are saying in private — that, 20 points behind in most polls, the Government is now doomed.

With factions already forming, "if there's going to be a leadership contest, please John, please don't hang around", she said.

When the Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney, addressed the party faithful in Bath he won thunderous applause for saying "every effort, every sinew, every waking moment for all in our party must be now devoted exclusively to winning the election.

"To every Conservative: one message. If you don't have something to say that will help us win, don't say anything at all."

Mr Major will not confirm May 1 as election day and — according to senior Tories — he is even refusing to tell close allies the date on which he will go to Buckingham Palace to seek a dissolution of Parliament.

"I must tell the Queen first," he is saying.

Mr Major will use his speech today for a highly-personalised vision of a Britain where ordinary families — not just the "confident and well-to-do" — would be able to afford to move from "the insecurity of dependence for the many to the security of independence for all".

'If there's going to be a leadership contest, please John, don't hang around'

Edwina Currie (above), yesterday

Howard to ease rape trial ordeal

Defendants will lose opportunity to question accusers directly

Luke Harding

ALLEGED rapists defending themselves in court will lose the right to cross-examine the people who have accused them, the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, said yesterday.

The move is designed to eliminate the harrowing ordeal which rape victims can suffer when their attackers choose to question them — often intimately — in open court.

"I fully sympathise with victims who have had to endure further distress by being cross-examined by their alleged attackers,' Mr Howard said.

"I think it is right that the courts should have the discretion, where necessary, to protect such vulnerable victims."

The proposal follows the case of Julia Mason, who was questioned over six days at the Old Bailey last summer by the man who raped her twice. Her ordeal sparked a public outcry.

Ralston Edwards, aged 42, who was found guilty on two counts of rape, attended court in the same jumper and jeans he had worn when he raped Mrs Mason at his home in Catford, south-east London, in December 1995.

In a low, flat voice devoid of emotion, he asked her to give a precise account of the sexual humiliation she had suffered at his hands. At one stage she fled the courtroom, complaining that she felt sick.

Mrs Mason, aged 34, complained to the European Commission of Human Rights about her treatment. "He was taunting me with questions about whether I wore any underwear, and implying he knew where my family lived," she said at the time.

"But despite all this, the judge was powerless to prevent his brutal line of questioning. I suppose she was worried that her intervention may have given him grounds for appeal. It was as if I had been raped once by Edwards, and again by the British judicial system."

Under the proposed changes, judges would be given discretion to stop defendants who are representing themselves in court from personally cross-examining people who have accused them of rape and other offences. Instead, cross-examination could be conducted only by a representative.

Since the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, defendants have been barred from interrogating child witnesses in cases alleging sexual offences, violence and cruelty. But legal experts have argued against changing the procedures for rape, arguing that judges should control threatening witnesses.

Victim Support welcomed Mr Howard's plans. "Too many women don't report sex crimes because they fear the ordeal that faces them if they do," said a spokesman, Paul Collins.

"There is a real risk at the moment that justice is not done for some women who feel unable to face this sort of trauma.

"In the case of Julia Mason, there was even a suggestion that the rapist got some form of sexual pleasure from cross-examining her. It cannot be allowed to continue."

The Labour MP Janet Anderson, who speaks on women's issues and has been pressing for such a measure, said: "It is clearly wrong that any woman or any man should have to go through such an experience.

"I am pleased the Home Office have decided to tackle this problem and am only sorry that something was not done earlier."

Julie Bindel, of Justice for Women, welcomed the announcement. "It is obviously the appropriate decision, but we need to urgently look at the falling conviction rates for rape, which currently stand at 9 per cent of reported cases," she said.

The Bar Council said the plans would protect witnesses. "We have long believed that it is right for judges to have more discretion in the treatment of witnesses," a spokeswoman said.

Ribald glee as Clinton limps on despite surgery for knee injury

Martin Walker in Washington

A GALE of ribaldry greeted the announcement yesterday that President Clinton would probably attend next week's summit with Boris Yeltsin on crutches, after tearing the ligaments of his knee in an early-hours stroll at the estate of golfer Greg Norman in Palm Beach, Florida.

"Must have been the housemaid's knee," quipped Don Imus, an irreverent morning radio host.

As the President entered surgery in Washington, even the Russians got in on the act. Turning the tables on US surgeons who flew in for Mr Yeltsin's heart bypass last November, a leading Moscow doctor, Vladimir Okhotinsky, said Russian medics were ready to examine Mr Clinton if needed.

The White House said Mr Clinton had stayed up late chatting with Norman at the golfer's home Tranquility after an evening fund-raising event in Florida. Walking back to his guest lodge at 1.20am, the President fell on steps and twisted his knee badly, tearing the quadriceps tendon.

"He literally tore the tendon from the bone," said Dr Joel Cohen. "The expectation should be a return to full activity."

Mr Clinton returned to Washington with his leg in a splint. A White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, said he entered the operating room at the naval hospital in the suburb of Bethesda feeling occasional pain but in good spirits. The operation to sew the tendon back on to his knee-cap was to take place under local anaesthetic.

The injury, painful and disabling but not serious, will keep the President on crutches for some weeks, but White House officials said they were not planning to cancel next week's summit with President Yeltsin in Helsinki.

Picture, page 6

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Inside

Britain
The foster father of schoolgirl Billie-Jo Jenkins, bludgeoned to death at her home, has been charged with her murder. 4

World News
Russia insisted the exclusion of the three Baltic states and former Soviet republics was a condition of any agreement with Nato. 5

Finance
Media baron Lord Hollick called for hugely profitable satellite TV group BSkyB to be forced to pay a government broadcasting levy. 11

Sport
Will Carling, who plays in his final international today, admits 'the buzz of playing for England has diminished'. The Week 24

Comment and Letters, 8
TV and Radio, 2; Weather, 2

The Week
Sport, 20-24; Crossword 24
Arts 18-19.

11
9 770261 307460

Chief Rabbi draws wrath of Reform □ Letter describes movement as 'false grouping who destroy the faith'

Anglo-Jewry riven by leak

Alex Bellos

BRITAIN'S Jewish community was yesterday facing its deepest split for more than 100 years after a newspaper published a leaked letter by the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks.

Long-running tensions between the Orthodox and Reform communities exploded into the open with the letter, in which the Chief Rabbi describes Reform as a "false grouping" of Jews "who destroy the faith".

The Chief Rabbi, who did not apologise for the remarks, faced demands by the non-Orthodox to redefine his title so that it was clear he spoke only for a section of Anglo-Jewry. Although officially he represents only Orthodox Jewry, he is widely seen as a figurehead for the community.

Rabbi Tony Bayfield, chief executive of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, said: "This incident has stretched our respect to the limit. Seldom if ever have things been made so explicit.

"It is an end to the pretence that one office can speak for us and represent us religiously. No body can give religious leadership and behave like this. There can only be peace and harmony in a community in which there is a recognition of the different strands."

The argument originated with the Chief Rabbi's decision not to go to the funeral of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, the broadcaster and Reform Jew who died last year, but to a secular memorial service last month.

To defuse criticisms in the ultra-Orthodox wing, Dr Sachs wrote a letter in rabbinic Hebrew — a language of hyperbole — to Dayan Chanoch Padwa, the 90-year-old leader of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations.

The letter was leaked to the Jewish Chronicle, which decided to print because of an "overriding public interest".

In the letter the Chief Rabbi described Rabbi Gryn as "amongst those who destroy the faith". He said his appearance at the secular service would offer a good opportunity to say he did not recognise the concept of a Reform rabbi and "a victory would be won" against the Reform movement.

Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Hugo Gryn (top right) and Rabbi Jonathan Romain MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE PYKE

Change and tradition

THE Torah — the five books of Moses which with the Prophets make up the Old Testament — is the sacred text on which Judaism is based.

Orthodox Jews believe that the books are an "unmediated reality" — the word of God unmediated by human beings — and must generally be taken as absolute.

The result has been ways of worship that have not changed for centuries. In Orthodox synagogues men and women sit apart and prayers are almost exclusively in Hebrew. Only men are allowed to become Orthodox rabbis.

The position of Chief Rabbi was created so that Anglo-Jews could have a spiritual leader. He represents the United Hebrew Congregations, whose principal constituent is the United Synagogue, which counts for about 40 per cent of British synagogues.

REFORM Judaism was the response of some in the community to come to terms with the modern world.

When Jews left their Western European ghettos in the 18th century they joined a society at odds with their traditions and beliefs. Reform Judaism accepts that the Torah was written by a human being and is limited by its place in history.

The first Reform synagogue in Britain opened in 1840. A quarter of all British synagogues are affiliated.

O'Reilly steps back as Heinz prepares for global remake

Roger Cowe and Mark Tran in New York

TONY O'Reilly yesterday began to step back from running the Heinz food group, raising expectations that he will commit more time to his newspaper empire, which includes a 43 per cent stake in the Independent.

As part of a shake-up of the baked beans, ketchup and pet food group, Mr O'Reilly signalled that after nearly 20 years as chief executive and then the first chairman from outside the Heinz family, he would hand over some power to his likely successor, William Johnson.

The 61-year-old billionaire Irishman will remain chairman, however, and is unlikely to step down completely for some time. For years he has demonstrated an ability to combine running the large, US-based group with a glittering social life and other business interests, largely based in Ireland.

The former Ireland rugby international, who is married to the shipping heiress Chris Goulandris, is thought to earn £50 million a year. Last year he paid almost £2 million for the 40-carat diamond engagement ring given to Jackie Kennedy by Aristotle Onassis, which he gave to his wife.

As well as running Heinz and chairing his newspaper group, Mr O'Reilly chairs the fine china and glass company Waterford Wedgewood. He has been one of the western world's most respected businessmen for years, with innovative marketing ideas which produced rapid growth for Heinz in the 1980s.

He has also built a substantial newspaper empire on the back of the Irish Independent, adding acquisitions in South Africa, New Zealand and Portugal. In Britain, Mr O'Reilly has bought local newspapers in addition to his stake in the Independent.

But Heinz has lost its way in recent years as the power of food manufacturers has declined against that of the supermarket chains and its collection of brands has lost favour with modern tastes.

Yesterday, Mr O'Reilly launched Project Millennia to a financial audience in San Francisco. He said Heinz would close or sell at least 25 plants around the world.

Howard backs minister in row over 'IRA scum'

David Hencke and Lawrence Donegan

MICHAEL Howard yesterday came to the aid of the junior minister who launched an outspoken attack on Roisin McAliskey, who was yesterday refused bail while awaiting extradition proceedings despite being seven months pregnant.

The Home Secretary backed David Maclean, who twice referred in a letter to a constituent to Ms McAliskey as an "IRA prisoner".

Mr Howard said: "David is right to be concerned about protecting the public from dangerous criminals."

The weather in Europe

Forecast for the cities

[illegible]

Around the world

Lunchtime yesterday (previous day in Americas)

[illegible]

European weather outlook

Scandinavia: A very cold northerly airflow covers the region, bringing snow showers to the north and west, but there should also be plenty of sunshine especially in Sweden, Denmark and southern Finland. Highs ranging from minus 4C in the northern interior, to 6C in Denmark.

Low Countries, Germany, Austria, Switzerland: A northerly airflow is weakening as a ridge of high pressure moves in from the west. Most places will be dry and rather cold today with broken cloud and occasional sunny spells, but there may be a few showers at first in eastern Germany and over the Alps. Belgium and Holland will become wet later today. Highs mainly between 7 and 10C.

France: A weak front is slow-moving over the eastern half of the country, bringing extensive cloud and a little drizzle or light rain. The best chance of sunny spells is in the West and South-west, and also in the Midi. Highs ranging from 8C in the north-east to 17C in the south-west.

Spain and Portugal: High pressure will maintain settled weather, with most places enjoying another warm, sunny day. There may be localised showers in Catalonia and over the Pyrenees. Highs between 18C and 23C.

Italy: A southward-moving cold front will bring scattered showers, but most places will also have some sunshine. Warm in the south, but colder than recently in the north. Highs between 13 and 18C.

Greece: A weak cold front will bring showers to northern Greece later today, otherwise it should be a dry day with well-broken cloud and warm sunshine at times. Highs mainly between 15 and 19C.

Television and radio — Saturday

BBC 1

8.10am Harry And The Hendersons. 8.25 News And Weather. 8.30 Children's BBC: Felix The Cat. 8.45 Phantom 2040. 9.10 The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest. 9.35 The Flintstones. 10.00 Live And Kicking. 1.12 Weather. 1.15 Grandstand. 5.30 News And Weather. 5.40 Regional News And Sport. 5.45 Dad's Army. 7.15 The New Adventures Of Superman. 8.00 Noel's New York House Party. 8.50 The National Lottery Live. 9.10 Crime Traveller. 10.00 News And Sport. 10.19 National Lottery Update. 10.20 Have Your Cake And Eat It. 11.15 They Think It's All Over. 11.45 Match Of The Day. 12.50 Chalk. 1.20 Top Of The Pops. 1.55 FILM: The Bride In Black. 3.25 Weather. 3.30 Close.

BBC 2

7.20am Maarten Van Heemskerck: Humanism And Painting. 7.45 Drifting Continents. 8.10 Lifestyles. Work And The Family. 9.00 Open Saturday. 11.30 FILM: Magic Town. 1.10 Film 97. 1.40 FILM: El Dorado. 3.45 International Rugby Union. 4.30 The Car's The Star. 4.50 The Saint. 5.40 FILM: To Have and Have Not. 7.15 Travels With Pevsner. 8.05 News And Sport. 8.20 Correspondent. 9.10 Call Of The Sea. 9.50 Till Death Us Do Part. 10.20 A Night In With The Girls. 11.10 Performance: My Night With Reg. 12.55 Windows On The World. 1.50 Global Videobyte. 2.15 Close.

BBC Prime

● Intelsat

7.00am World News. 7.15 World Weather. 7.20 Travel Show Short. 7.30 The Brollys. 7.45 Bodger and Badger. 8.00 Look Sharp! 8.15 Why Don't You? 8.40 Kevin's Cousins. 9.05 Blue Peter. 9.25 Grange Hill Omnibus. 10.00 Dr Who: The Monster of Peladon. 10.25 Timekeepers. 10.50 The House of Eliott. 11.40 World Weather. 11.45 Take Six Cooks. 12.10 EastEnders. 1.30 Kilroy. 2.15 Timekeepers. 2.40 The Sooty Show. 3.00 Bodger and Badger. 3.15 Dangermouse. 3.40 Blue Peter. 4.00 Grange Hill Omnibus. 4.35 World Weather. 4.40 The House of Eliott. 5.30 One Man and His Dog. 6.00 Top of the Pops. 6.25 Dr Who: The Monster of Peladon. 6.50 Dad's Army. 7.20 Are You Being Served? 7.55 Noel's House Party. 8.50 TV Heroes. 9.00 Benny Hill. 9.50 World Weather. 10.00 The Black Adder. 10.35 Fawlty Towers. 11.10 The Young Ones. 11.45 TOTP2. 12.30 Later with Jools Holland. 1.25 World Weather. 1.30 TBA. 2.00 Forecasting the Economy.

BBC World

● Eutelsat

7.00am News and Weather. 7.20 Window on Europe. 8.00 World Headlines and Weather. 8.05 World Focus: Science Friction. 9.00 World Headlines and Weather 9.05 World Focus: Pandora's Box. 10.00 News and Weather. 10.30 Time Out: Holiday. 11.00 World Headlines and Weather. 11.05 World Focus: Horizon. 12.00 World News. 12.20 Britain in View. 12.50 Earth Report. 1.00 World Headlines and Weather. 1.05 World Focus: Great Journeys. 2.00 News and Weather. 2.20 The Week. 3.00 News and Weather. 3.30 Timeout: Film 97 with Barry Norman. 4.00 World Headlines and Weather. 4.05 World Focus: Correspondent. 5.00 News and Weather. 5.30 Timeout: Tomorrow's World. 6.00 News and Weather. 6.30 Time Out: The Clothes Show. 7.00 News and Weather. 7.20 This Week. 8.00 News and Weather. 8.20 Britain in View. 9.00 World Headlines and Weather. 9.05 World Focus: Horizon. 10.00 News and Weather. 10.30 Time Out: Top Gear. 11.00 News and Weather. 11.20 Window on Europe. 12.00 World News. 12.25 This Week. 1.00 News and Weather. 1.30 India Business Report. 2.00 News and Weather. 2.20 This Week. 3.00 News and Weather. 3.30 India Business Report. 4.00 News and Weather. 4.20 This Week. 5.00 World Headlines and Weather. 5.00 World Headlines and Weather. 5.05 World Focus: Horizon. 5.05 World Focus: Horizon. 6.00 News and Weather. 6.00 News and Weather. 6.25 India Business Report. 6.25 India Business Report.

Radio 4

92.4-94.6 MHz; 198 kHz (1514)

7.00am News. 7.10 Farming Today. 7.50 Prayer for the Day. 8.00 Today. 10.00 News. 10.05 Sport On 4. 10.30 Breakaway. 11.00 Loose Ends. 12.00 The Week in Westminster. 12.30 The Americas File. 1.00 Money Box. 1.25 The News Quiz. 1.55 Weather. 2.00 News. 2.10 Any Questions? 2.55 Shipping Forecast. 3.00 Any Answers. 3.30 Saturday Playhouse: Death and the Pleasant Voices. 5.00 That's History. 5.30 Science Now. 6.00 Anthony Clare's Musical Melancholia. 6.40 New York Dames. 6.50 Shipping Forecast. 6.55 Weather. 7.00 Six O'Clock News. 7.25 Week Ending. 7.50 Utopia and Other Destinations. 8.20 Kaleidoscope Feature. 8.50 On These Days. 9.50 Saturday Night Theatre: The Colour Norman. 10.35 Classics with Kay. 10.50 Ten to Ten. 11.00 News. 11.15 Dark Tales: The [illegible]

Minute. 2.00 Newshour. 3.00 News. 3.05 Sportsworld. 4.00 News. 4.05 Sportsworld. 5.00 News. 5.15 Sportsworld. 5.30 News in German 30 (648 only). 6.00 News. 6.01 Weekend. 6.30 From the Weeklies. 6.45 Sports Roundup. 7.00 Newsdesk. 7.30 Science in Action. 8.00 News. 8.01 The Greenfield Collection. 8.45 Fourth Estate. 9.00 Newshour. 10.00 News. 10.05 World Business Review. 10.15 Britain Today. 10.30 Meridian Live. 11.00 Newsdesk. 11.30 Play of the Week: The Importance of Being Earnest. 1.00 Newsdesk. 1.30 Letter From America. 1.45 Britain Today. 2.00 Newsdesk. 2.30 Just A Minute. 3.00 Newsday. 3.30 People & Politics. 4.00 News. 4.15 Sports Roundup. 4.30 Music Review. 5.00 Newsdesk. 5.30 Short Story. 5.45 On The Move. 6.00 Newsday. 6.30 Weekend (Europe). 6.30 In Praise of God (not 648).

The Movie Channel

● Astra

7.05 The Walls Of Jericho. 9.00 Farewell To The King. 11.00 The St Tammany Miracle. 1.00 Bandit's Silver Angel. 3.00 Free Willy 2. 5.00 The Amazing Panda Adventure. 7.00 Johnny's Girl. 9.00 Free Willy 2. 11.00 Parallel Lives. 12.45 Pentathlon. 2.30 Diamond Skulls. 4.00 The Most Desired Man. 5.35 The St Tammany Miracle.

Sky Movies

● Astra

7.20 The Borrowers. 9.00 Police Academy 7: Mission To Moscow. 11.00 Roswell. 1.00 The Neverending Story III: Return To Fantasia. 3.00 I Love Trouble. 5.00 Police Academy 7: Mission To Moscow. 7.00 Roswell. 9.00 I Love Trouble. 11.00 The Shooter. 12.50 Inner Sanctum. 2.25 Fatherland. 4.15 The Cowboy Way.

Sky Sports

● Astra

8.00 World Sport Special. 8.30 The Rugby Club. 9.30 Racing News. 10.00 Rugby League: Bradford Vs Warrington. 11.30 Boxing: Dean Francis Vs Cornelius Carr. 1.00 Sports Saturday. 2.00 Badminton: All England Championships Finals - Live. 4.45 Sports Saturday Results. 6.30 NHL Ice Hockey: Power Week. 7.30 Ice Hockey Superleague Play-Off - Live. 10.00 Rugby Union: Five Nations Championship. 12.30 Spanish Football. 3.00 Ice Hockey Superleague Play-Off. 5.30 Close.

Eurosport

● Astra/Eutelsat

8.30 Basketball. 9.00 Snowboarding. 9.30 Freeride. 10.00 Alpine Skiing: World Cup Final. 12.00 Nordic Combined Skiing. 1.00 Freestyle Skiing. 2.00 Snowboarding: FIS World Cup Giant Slalom - Live. 3.00 Cycling: Season Preview & Paris-Nice. 4.15 Cross-Country Skiing: World Cup. 5.00 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Final Giant Slalom - Live. 6.15 Alpine Skiing: Men's World Cup Final Giant Slalom - Live. 7.30 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Final Giant Slalom - Live. 8.40 Alpine Skiing: Men's World Cup Final Giant Slalom - Live. 9.30 Boxing Special: Roy Jones Jr. 10.00 Tennis: Indian Wells ATP Tour/Super 9 Tournament - Live. 1.00 Darts: European Grand Prix. 2.00 Close.

Sky One

● Astra

8.00 Orson and Olivia. 8.30 Free Willy. 9.00 Young Indiana Jones Chronicles. 10.00 Quantum Leap. 11.00 Kung Fu: The Legend Continues. 12.00 The Legend of the Hidden City. 12.30 Sea Rescue. 1.00 World Wrestling Federation: Blast Off. 2.00 World Wrestling Federation: Challenge. 3.00 Star Trek. 4.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation. 5.00 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. 6.00 Star Trek: Voyager. 7.00 Kung Fu: The Legend Continues. 8.00 Hercules: The Legendary Journeys. 9.00 Coppers. 9.30 Cops I. 10.00 Cops II. 10.30 Serial Killers. 11.00 Law and Order. 12.00 The Red Shoe Diaries. 12.30 The Movie Show. 1.00 Wild Oats. 1.30 L.A.P.D. 2.00 Dream On. 2.30 Smouldering Lust. 3.00 Hit Mix Long Play.

UK Gold

● Astra

9.00 The Sullivans. 10.00 Juliet Bravo. 11.00 Neighbours. 1.00 Pop Profile. 1.10 EastEnders. 3.55 Minder. 5.00 Ever Decreasing Circles. 5.35 Every Second Counts. 6.15 The A-Team. 7.15 Bullseye. 7.45 Just Good Friends. 8.25 Porridge. 9.05 Freddie Starr. 9.40 Ironside. 10.40 The Sweeney. 11.45 The Equalizer. 12.40 Sports Anorak of the Year. 1.10 Miami Vice. 2.00 Miami Vice. 2.55 Shopping at Night.

NBC Superchannel

● Astra/Eutelsat

7.00 Travel Xpress. 7.30 The McLaughlin Group. 8.00 Hello Austria, Hello Vienna. 8.30 Europa Journal. 9.00 Users Group. 9.30 Computer Chronicles. 10.00 Internet Cafe. 10.30 At Home. 11.00 Super Shop. 12.00 European PGA Golf Tour. 1.00 NHL Power Week. 2.00 NCAA Basketball. 4.00 Europe à [illegible]

BBC World Service

[illegible]

Discovery

[illegible]

Television and radio — Sunday

BBC 1

8.30am Children's BBC: Jim Henson's Animal Show. 8.55 Playdays. 9.15 A Helping Hand: Brazil. 9.30 Breakfast With Frost. 10.30 Kingdom Come! 11.15 See Hear! 11.45 National Trust Gardens. 12.00 The Eleventh Hour. 1.00 CountryFile. 1.25 Weather For The Week Ahead. 1.30 On The Record. 2.30 EastEnders. 3.50 The Clothes Show. 4.15 FILM: The Pink Panther. 6.10 True Tilda. 6.40 News And Weather. 7.00 Regional News. 7.05 Songs Of Praise. 7.40 Comic Relief Update. 7.45 Last Of The Summer Wine. 8.15 Antiques Roadshow. 9.00 Hamish Macbeth. 9.50 Birds Of A Feather. 10.20 Have Your Cake And Eat It. 11.15 News And Weather. 11.30 Omnibus. 12.20 Heart Of The Matter. 1.00 FILM: Amadeus. 3.35 Weather. 3.40 Close.

BBC 2

7.10am Open University: Democracy: Fact Or Fiction? 7.35 Humanity And The Scaffold. 8.00 Gender Matters. 8.25 Open Sunday. 9.15 Children's BBC: Stay Tooned! 10.10 The Family Ness. 10.15 The Itsy Bitsy Spider. 10.35 I'll Never Work Awards. 11.00 Ship To Shore. 11.30 Grange Hill. 11.55 The Wild House. 12.20 Short Change. 12.45 The O Zone. 1.15 TOTP 2. 1.45 The Simpsons. 2.30 Regional Programme. 3.00 FILM: Genesis II. 4.10 World Figure Skating Championships. 5.10 Crufts 97. 5.55 Rugby Special. 6.55 Natural World. 7.45 Star Trek: Voyager. 8.30 A Lesson For Us All. 9.20 The Car's The Star. 9.40 The Money Programme. 10.20 A Night In With The Girls. 11.10 FILM: Chinatown. 1.15 Robert Towne - Writing Chinatown. 1.30 FILM: Lapse Of Memory. 2.50 Weather. 2.55 Close. 3.00 Learning Zone.

BBC Prime

● Intelsat

7.00am World News. 7.15 World Weather. 7.20 ChuckleVision. 7.40 Bodger and Badger. 7.55 The Sooty Show. 8.15 Dangermouse. 8.40 Uncle Jack and the Dark Side of the Moon. 9.05 Blue Peter. 9.25 Grange Hill Omnibus. 10.00 Top of the Pops. 10.30 Timekeepers. 11.00 Middlemarch. 11.55 World Weather. 12.00 The Terrace. 12.25 The Bill Omnibus. 1.15 Going, Going, Gone. 1.45 Kilroy. 2.30 Timekeepers. 2.55 Jonny Briggs. 3.10 Bodger and Badger. 3.25 Why Don't You? 3.50 Blue Peter. 4.10 Grange Hill Omnibus. 4.45 World Weather. 4.50 Middlemarch. 5.45 Antiques Roadshow. 6.15 TOTP2. 7.00 World News. 7.15 World Weather. 7.20 Celebrity Mantlepiece. 7.30 Wildlife. 8.00 999. 9.00 Stevenson's Travels. 10.00 Yes Minister. 10.30 King Girl. 11.45 Lifeswaps. 12.00 Songs of Praise. 12.35 She's Out. 1.25 World Weather. 1.30 Going to School in Japan.

BBC World

● Eutelsat

7.00am World News and Weather. 7.20 Britain In View. 8.00 World News and Weather. 8.20 This Week. 9.00 World Headlines and Weather. 9.05 World Focus: Correspondent. 10.00 World News and Weather. 10.30 Timeout: The Clothes Show. 11.00 World Headlines and Weather. 11.05 Everyman: Science Friction. 12.00 News and Weather. 12.20 Window on Europe. 1.00 World Headlines and Weather. 1.05 World Focus: Pandora's Box. 2.00 Headlines and Weather. 2.05 Breakfast with Frost. 3.00 World News and Weather. 3.30 Timeout: Holiday. 4.00 World Headlines and Weather. 4.05 Horizon. 5.00 World News and Weather. 5.20 Earth Report. 5.30 Film 97 with Barry Norman. 6.00 World News and Weather. 6.30 Timeout: Top Gear. 7.00 World News and Weather. 7.20 On the Record. 8.00 World News and Weather. 8.20 Window on Europe. 9.00 World Headlines and Weather. 9.05 World Focus: Great Journeys. 10.00 World News and Weather. 10.30 Timeout: Tomorrow's World. 11.00 World Report. 12.00 World Report. 1.00 World News and Weather. 1.10 The Money Programme. 2.00 Newsroom. 5.00 Headlines and Weather. 5.00 World Headlines and Weather. 5.05 The Money Programme. 5.05 The Money Programme. 6.00 Newsday. 6.00 Newsday.

Radio 4

92.4-94.6 MHz; 198 kHz (1514)

7.00am News. 7.10 Something Understood. 8.00 News. 8.10 Sunday Papers. 8.15 On Your Farm. 8.40 Sunday. 9.50 The Week's Good Cause. 10.00 News. 10.10 Sunday Papers. 10.15 Letter from America. 10.30 Morning Service. 11.15 The Archers. 12.15 Mediumwave. 12.45 Books and Company. 1.15 Desert Island Discs. 1.55 Weather. 2.00 The World This Weekend. 2.55 Shipping Forecast. 3.00 Gardeners' Question Time. 3.30 Classic Serial: The Barchester Chronicles. 4.30 Pick of the Week. 5.15 Nureyev: A Dance of Death. 6.00 Novel America. 6.30 Poetry Please! 6.50 Shipping Forecast. 6.55 Weather. 7.00 Six O'Clock News. 7.15 Feedback. 7.30 In Business. 8.00 Children's [illegible]

Anything Goes. 2.00 Newshour. 3.00 News. 3.01 Ship of Light. 3.45 Letter From America. 4.00 News. 4.05 Sports Roundup. 4.15 Development 97. 4.30 F.O.O.C. 4.50 Portrait of the Artist. 5.00 News. 5.15 Global Concerns. 5.30 News in German. 6.00 Europe Today. 6.30 Write On. 6.40 Book Choice. 6.45 Sports Roundup. 7.00 Newsdesk. 7.30 Play of the Week: The Importance of Being Earnest. 9.00 Newshour. 10.00 News. 10.05 World Business Brief. 10.15 Britain Today. 10.30 Jazz For The Asking. 11.00 Newsdesk. 11.30 Letter From America. 11.45 Sports Roundup. 12.00 News. 12.10 Who's Who In Music. 12.15 The Learning World. 12.30 In Praise of God. 1.00 Newsdesk. 1.30 Development '97. 1.45 Britain Today. 2.00 Newsdesk. 2.30 Short Story. 2.45 On The Move. 3.00 Newsday. 3.30 Anything Goes. 4.00 News. 4.15 Sports Roundup. 4.30 The Missionaries. 5.00 Newsdesk. 5.30 Europe Today. 6.00 Newsday. 6.30 Europe Today.

The Movie Channel

● Astra

7.10 Sons And Lovers. 9.00 Behind The Waterfall. 11.00 Young Indiana Jones: Travels With Father. 1.00 The Other Woman. 3.00 The Sky's No Limit. 5.00 Cagney And Lacey: The View Through The Glass Ceiling. 7.00 Invisible Mom. 8.30 Star Wars Special. 9.00 Safe Passage. 11.00 Mortal Kombat. 12.45 Phantasm III. 2.15 The Haunting Of Seacliff Inn. 3.50 A Fistful Of Fingers. 5.15 Young Indiana Jones: Travels With Father.

Sky Movies

● Astra

7.10 Silver Streak. 9.00 Two For The Road. 11.00 Mass Appeal. 1.00 Hercules. 3.00 Back Home. 5.00 The Giant Of Thunder Mountain. 7.00 Imaginary Crimes. 9.00 Dumb And Dumber. 11.00 Hostile Force. 12.40 The Movie Show. 1.10 Airheads. 2.40 Forbidden Beauty. 4.10 Sleeping Dogs.

Sky Sports

● Astra

8.00 Survival of the Fittest. 8.30 Trans World Sport. 9.30 Five Nations Championship. 12.00 Football: Goals on Sunday. 1.00 World Wide Rugby. 3.00 NHL Ice Hockey. 4.00 Football: Chelsea Vs Sunderland - Live. 7.30 Rugby League: London Broncos Vs St Helens - Live. 9.30 Spanish Football. 11.30 Football: Chelsea Vs Sunderland. 1.00 NHL Ice Hockey. 2.00 Rugby League: London Broncos Vs St Helens. 4.00 Close.

Eurosport

● Astra/Eutelsat

8.30 Equestrianism: Volvo World Cup. 9.30 Cross-Country Skiing: World Cup. 11.00 Motorcycling: Albacete Euro Open - Live. 1.00 Alpine Skiing: Men's World Cup Final Giant Slalom - Live. 2.00 Snowboarding: FIS World Cup Half Pipe - Live. 3.00 Ski-Jumping: World Cup. 3.30 Cycling: Paris to Nice Race - Live. 5.00 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Final Slalom - Live. 6.00 Alpine Skiing: Men's World Cup Final Slalom - Live. 7.00 Alpine Skiing: Women's World Cup Final Slalom - Live. 8.15 Tennis: Indian Wells ATP Tour/Super 9 Tournament. 11.30 Alpine Skiing: Men's World Cup Final Slalom. 12.15 Motorcycling: Albacete Euro Open. 1.30 Close.

Sky One

● Astra

7.00 Hour of Power. 8.00 Orson and Olivia. 8.30 Free Willy. 9.00 Young Indiana Jones Chronicles. 10.00 Quantum Leap. 11.00 Kung Fu: the Legend Continues. 12.00 Hit Mix '97. 1.00 WWF. 2.00 The Lazarus Man. 3.00 Star Trek. 4.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation. 5.00 Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. 6.00 Muppets Tonight! 6.30 Walter's World. 7.00 The Simpsons. 7.30 The Simpsons. 8.00 Early Edition. 9.00 The New Adventures of Superman. 10.00 The X-Files. 11.00 Millennium. 12.00 Forever Knight. 1.00 Wild Oats. 1.30 L.A.P.D. 2.00 Civil Wars. 3.00 Hit Mix Long Play.

UK Gold

● Astra

8.00 Jackanory. 8.20 Trumpton. 8.35 Blue Peter. 9.05 Worzel Gummidge. 9.35 Sports Anorak of the Year. 10.05 Survivors. 11.05 Blake's Seven. 12.10 Dr Who Omnibus: The Revenge of the Cybermen. 2.10 Bullseye! 4.00 The Bill Omnibus. 6.20 In Sickness and in Health. 7.00 Bullseye. 7.30 You Rang, M'Lord? 8.30 Morecambe and Wise. 9.30 Rumpole of the Bailey. 10.35 Testament of Youth. 11.40 I, Claudius. 12.40 Spitting Image. 1.10 Live at Jongleurs. 1.40 Green Ice. 3.30 Shopping at Night.

NBC Superchannel

● Astra/Eutelsat

9.00 Executive Lifestyles. 9.30 Europe à La Carte. 10.00 Travel Xpress. 10.30 Flavours of Italy. 11.00 Super Shop. 12.00 NBC Super Sports. 12.30 World Sports Special. [illegible]

Discovery

[illegible]

هكذا من الأصل

Charting a descent into anarchy

Late January
● The pyramid get-rich-quick schemes collapse. They are banned and their assets are seized but not before hundreds of thousands of Albanians lose their savings. Protesters take to the streets, clashing with the police in Tirana (above).

Early March
● Vlore, Sarande, Gjirokaster and other southern towns fall to the rebels, who ransack army barracks for weapons. Government admits the south is "completely out of control".

March 9
● President Berisha signs an agreement with leaders of the main political parties, agrees to early elections in June, and offers an amnesty to the rebels. But the concessions fail to curb the spread of the increasingly anarchic revolt.

March 11
● The anarchy spreads to the north, engulfing Tropoje and Bajram Curri. President Berisha appoints a little-known Socialist from the south, Bashkim Fino, as prime minister. 70 per cent of the army is reported to have either deserted or defected to the rebels.

March 12
● The turmoil reaches Tirana. Crowds, possibly supporters of President Berisha (above), ransack gun depots in the capital's military academy. Party leaders issue a joint appeal for calm. The airport is closed.

March 13
● President Berisha appeals for military intervention from Western Europe. Rebels seize Tirana airport. The first evacuation convoys take Britons and other expatriates to the coast. The president's children are among the exodus.

March 14
● Albanians try to flee on last ferry to Italy (above). Airlift of foreign nationals suspended as US helicopters come under missile and gunfire. Franz Vranitzky, former Austrian chancellor, seeks a path out of the chaos in talks aboard an Italian warship in the Adriatic.

Farce and tragedy amid the creeping chaos

Julian Borger reports on the surreal drama of a collapse into lawlessness as the old order is submerged in the turmoil

ONE of the stranger moments of the Albanian crisis came in the early hours of yesterday morning when a few old tanks rolled on to the streets of the capital, Tirana. The news was flashed around the world. Here at last was a recognisable scene from a revolution — "tanks defend the presidency".

But the confusion and looting continued. And after a few hours, the tanks coughed and creaked offstage, like aged actors who had misread their cue, or — more likely — turned up in the wrong play.

Albania has written a new script and the rest of the world is wondering nervously what it means for the future.

Very little of Albania is now under government control. By the beginning of the week, most towns in the south had been seized by crowds of angry citizens and their hastily chosen representatives. This week, the turmoil spread to the north and finally Tirana.

By yesterday, it was unclear whether President Sali Berisha's authority extended much beyond his palace. His hasty but belated reshuffling of the political deck on Tuesday — by swearing in a new prime minister, Bashkim Fino, a previously obscure politician drawn from the ranks of the opposition Socialists — went almost unnoticed on the streets.

In a surreal drama, the besuited politicians shook hands and frowned over documents, while constant gunfire echoed outside.

Ordinary politics had come to an abrupt end and there was a clear dividing wall of miscomprehension between the Tirana politicians and the masses.

The opposition Social Democrat leader, Skender Gjinushi, poured scorn on Mr Berisha for leading the country up to and over the abyss, but he also threw up his hands in frustration over the behaviour of the crowd.

"They do not know why they are firing or what they are firing at," he wailed. "The truth is Tirana is now in total anarchy. It is not a protest . . . and we don't know who is in charge."

It may be that, for the time being, Mr Berisha would prefer that nobody is in charge rather than any of his closest rivals. There was speculation in Tirana yesterday that the president had sent one of his aides, Shaban Memia, on to the streets to egg on the looters in the hope of surviving in the confusion.

'They do not know why they are firing or what they are firing at. We don't know who is in charge'
Skender Gjinushi, opposition leader

Meanwhile, in the opinion pages of western Europe, armchair theorists have done battle with competing interpretations of what is going on: north against south, an ethnic conflict between Gegs and Tosks (the two main ethnic groups), cities versus the villages and (most bitterly disputed) communists against capitalists.

One after another, all these rigid templates have been tossed aside by the chaotic vigour of events. Lawlessness is spread evenly across the country because most people discovered they had been ripped off more or less equally by the fraudulent savings schemes which collapsed in January.

There are no front lines, and no pitched battles. Nearly all the bullets spent so far have been aimed upwards — "a war against the sky" as one bystander put it — and the overwhelming majority of the casualties have been accidental.

When questioned by journalists, most Albanians have said they want to see the back of Mr Berisha, who they blame for failing to stop, and quite possibly profiting from, the pyramid get-rich-quick schemes which were allowed to grow cancerously throughout an impoverished but naively optimistic society, sucking in much of the population's life savings.

But although the presidential palace was unguarded for hours on Thursday until the arrival of the tanks, none of the gangs roaming Tirana seemed to pay it any heed. Instead, 100 yards away, men, women and children were ransacking an army weapons store.

Children too small to shoulder their newly acquired guns tied string to them and dragged them along the pavement. They took their guns and headed, not for the palace, but to the outskirts of the city to loot the food warehouses.

Albania seems to be undergoing a grotesque experiment. This is what happens in a European state when civic society, law and order fall away.

Albanians, it seems, are not acting according to some ancient tribal creed, or because they are "hot-blooded" Mediterranean types. They are acting out of cool rationality.

They have measured their survival needs for the coming weeks or months and pursued the two basics, guns and food — food to eat after the shops are gutted, and guns to stop strangers taking the food.

Zef Camaj, a leader of the opposition Forum for Democracy, said: "The people are arming themselves out of self-defence, because they are afraid of what will happen tomorrow."

The awful realisation is dawning that Albania may be entering a Mad Max phase of post-cold war history, with warlords carving out territory by force of arms.

In the southern town of Vlore, the authorities were overthrown at the beginning of the month after weeks of protests over the population's lost investments. The rebel victory set off a string of takeovers across the south, but the people of Vlore now live in fear of the warlords who rose to the top in the tumult.

Albert Shyti, aged 27, who leads the new Committee to Protect Vlore, was a labourer before the revolt. He now drives a new Mercedes with an assault rifle in the passenger seat and bodyguards in the back. According to local people, his sudden ascent owes much to his readiness to threaten force to accrue arms and money.

The popular insurrection has turned sour and Vlore residents now say they live in fear of his gang. But he could be a paradigm of the new order.

The ranks of would-be warlords were swelled significantly on Wednesday night, when prison officials released 600 convicts, including the country's former communist leader, Ramiz Alia, petty criminals and several seedy businessmen who got rich from the pyramid schemes. They fled into the night, almost certainly to fuel Albania's flames.

This unravelling of Albania has left Europe with two questions to ponder: most immediately, how the weapons might be coaxed back into the armouries and some semblance of order restored? And in the longer term, how strong is the skein of social order preventing Serbia, Bulgaria and the former Soviet Union descending into the same apocalyptic turmoil?

The distinction between Albania and its close neighbours could perhaps only be measured in pence. The Albanian policemen who abandoned their posts were paid £1.20 a month. In Bulgaria, the monthly police salary is closer to £10.

The theme of the day is how to get the Albanian toothpaste back in the tube. After meeting a handful of politicians on an Italian warship yesterday, the former Austrian chancellor, Franz Vranitzky, said Western military intervention might do some good and called for a volunteer coalition of Western states to send a joint force.

Nato planners and observers in Albania are less confident. As a BBC journalist in Tirana said yesterday: peacekeeping troops "would finally provide a target for all these people to shoot at". The missile and gunfire aimed yesterday at United States helicopters hammered the point home.

Most observers believe the fall of Mr Berisha would take some of the sting out of the anger, but that is a long way from disarming the populace. It is far from clear who would take his place.

Western intervention might do some good . . . a joint force from a volunteer coalition
Franz Vranitzky, European envoy

The West does not have a good record for backing the right horse. Mr Berisha was widely hailed as a new breed of Balkan democrat, although he had been an active and avid communist under the dictatorship of Enver Hoxha, and one of the late despot's personal physicians.

Ben Blushi, editor of the independent Albanian newspaper, Koha Jone, described how Mr Berisha set about stripping the judiciary of independence and building "a system and a state that devoted all its energy to fighting those whom the president considered enemies".

But the threat of a new wave of Albanian refugees is adding urgency to international attempts at mediation. Crowds have had to be beaten off the last Italian ferries leaving the Adriatic port of Durres.

There is also growing concern in the West that all Albania's looted weapons could find their way across the border to fuel an incipient rebellion in Kosovo, Serbia's ethnic Albanian province.

So the search is on for a new strongman. Albert Shyti and other leaders from the southern towns, grouped together in the self-styled National Committee for Public Salvation, were summoned to meet Mr Vranitzky on his warship yesterday evening. The careers of Albania's new warlords may have yet to reach their peak.

● Foreign Office helpline for people worried about relatives in Albania: 0171-839 5656.

Lucky few escape from Tirana

Continued from page 1
has lost his mind have become commonplace. "He is pathologically crazy," said a former minister in his government. "He plays a democrat by day but by night he is a gangster."

A Western diplomat, who saw the president on Thursday, was astonished that Mr Berisha was virtually on his own in the presidential palace overlooking Tirana. "There was no one around him. Virtually everyone had disappeared."

Law and order has disintegrated. All 1,300 prisoners from Albania's jails are at large and the rumour-machine says the Shik has armed some of the worst murderers to fight the rebels.

The effective head of the Albanian prison service, Bedri Ceku, sat in despair in his white-walled office in the justice ministry, drawing on a cigarette. "The state has collapsed," he said.

Earlier, around 9am, the US Marine Chinooks and two Huey helicopter gunships flew in low over Tirana's Ottoman minaret. Outside the US embassy there was utter chaos. Families with children scurrying this way and that, coaches packed with white faces — American evacuees — wide-eyed with anxiety and US civilian police barking contradictory commands in dark blue flak jackets.

The buses moved slowly through traffic jams to the embassy's residential compound just down the hill from Mr Berisha's presidential palace.

There the evacuees queued to board the clattering Chinooks while a troop of Marines circled the perimeter fence, studying the landscape through their sniper sights.

But they were the lucky ones. On the outside of the concrete and steel-barred walls that marked the perimeter, an Albanian man and his red-eyed daughter, aged two, looked on as the Chinook slowly took off. For some people it was easy to leave Albania, but for them, impossible.

Albanians cannot even clear up their dead. On the main boulevard outside the president's office, a scattering of sand lay on a small puddle of human remains, the dark Macadam stained red. It would take two buckets of water to clean up the remains, but everyone in Tirana is too scared of being shot to go out and tidy up.

They are the remains of two men shot dead by the police at 2am. Officially, three people were killed on Thursday night, but no one believes the official figures.

The true death toll in Tirana is unknown. It will be more than three and much more in the coming days.

Additional reporting by Joanna Robertson, Tirana.

Pearson is unmarried and 37. Vast legends have been erected around this, helped by former female friends saying nice things about him, mostly to Nigel Dempster, and Pearson saying nothing.
Charles Nevin interviews Neil Pearson

The Week page 15

News in brief

Injunction against Anne Scargill

ANNE SCARGILL, 52, the wife of the miners' union leader, Arthur Scargill, has been ordered not to go within a mile of the home of Richard Budge, owner of RJB Mining. She was arrested and released without charge twice within five hours while protesting against open-cast mining near Mr Budge's mansion at Wiseton, Nottinghamshire, last Sunday.

She and fellow campaigner Steve Parry were served with injunctions granted at the High Court in London on Tuesday.

RJB Mining yesterday confirmed it had taken action against the pair in an attempt to avoid a repeat of last Sunday's early-morning protest by 40 supporters of the campaign group "No Opencast", who tried to dig up Mr Budge's garden.

Mrs Scargill and Mr Parry said: "We have no intention of giving up the fight against strip mining."

Bouncer jailed for butting MP

KEIRON QUINN, a 30-year-old bouncer who admitted head-butting Ian McCartney, Labour MP for Makerfield, and breaking his nose, was jailed for 12 months by Judge Brian Carter at Bolton crown court yesterday. He had pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to assaulting the MP and causing him actual bodily harm at Wigan Labour Club last November 16.

Mr McCartney, 45, is an Opposition front bench spokesman on employment and has campaigned for a national registration scheme for doormen and bouncers.

The court heard that Quinn, who is married with two children, had previous convictions for violence dating back to 1985.

Clunes accepts libel damages

ACTOR Martin Clunes yesterday accepted £1,000 libel damages from the Daily Express, for being called a "stupid, nasty, foul-mouthed, posturing juvenile with a limited command of the language". The Men Behaving Badly star, who was at the High Court for the announcement of his settlement, will donate the sum to the Aids charity, the Terence Higgins Trust.

His counsel, Manuel Barca, said the newspaper offered a right of reply but declined to publish an apology. Express Newspapers and columnist Sir Bernard Ingham had paid £1,000 into court, which Mr Clunes had decided to accept. He would also receive legal costs.

Firefighters can be sued

FIREFIGHTERS are not immune from being sued for negligence if they make things worse or create a danger after arriving at a fire, the Court of Appeal ruled yesterday. Lords Justices Stuart-Smith, Potter and Judge dismissed an appeal by Hampshire county council, which had to pay out £16 million compensation to the owners and occupiers of an office building in Basingstoke for a serious blunder by the county fire brigade.

Fire brigades had argued in three test cases that they should be immune from negligence claims on public policy grounds.

In the Hampshire case, where the building was gutted after a firefighter switched off the sprinkler system, Lord Justice Stuart-Smith said the defendants had increased the danger. But in two other test cases the judges upheld rulings that it would not be "fair and reasonable" to allow the brigades to be sued. — *Clare Dyer*

Drug money to fund research

ACADEMICS are taking a cut of drug dealers' profits, courtesy of Cleveland police. Police are to give Teesside University £12,600 to support research into drugs-related crime. Colin Dunnighan, senior lecturer in criminology, said the money would be used for an annual prize to the student putting forward the best research proposal on drugs-related crime. — *Donald MacLeod*

12-year-old set for Oxford

A 12-YEAR-OLD girl is a step away from becoming one of Britain's youngest university students. Sufiah Yusof, from Weston Favell, Northampton, needs to pass one more test to begin a mathematics degree at Oxford University. She is emulating Ruth Lawrence, who became Britain's youngest graduate when she gained a First in mathematics at Oxford in 1985.

Prison for sculptor

A SCULPTOR who moved to Cheriton Bishop, Devon, for peace and quiet so he could concentrate on his art was yesterday sent to prison for 2½ years after pleading guilty to threatening to kill two farmhands whose tractors had disturbed him.

Exeter Crown Court heard that Steven May, 32, made the farmhands kneel in front of him and threatened to blow their heads off with what appeared to be a double-barrelled shotgun.

May was also sentenced to 28 days, to run concurrently, after pleading guilty to cultivating two cannabis plants in his back garden. — *Geoffrey Gibbs*

TOMORROW

Free

A recipe book for people with taste. But no time

No tokens to collect. Just a free book inside every copy

THE FIRST SUNDAY PAPER. AND THE MOST ORIGINAL

The Observer

The train now standing . . . South West Trains, which has had to cut services after shedding drivers, faces the penalty

PHOTOGRAPHS: GUY NEWMAN

Rail firm faces £1m fine

Regulator threatens SWT with franchise loss over poor service

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

SOUTH West Trains faces a £1 million fine and is two moves away from having its franchise removed unless it improves its services, the rail industry regulator announced yesterday.

John O'Brien, director of the office of passenger rail franchising, Opraf, said that unless SWT runs at least 98.5 per cent of its services in April an enforcement order will be issued.

Mr O'Brien also ordered the company to spend £1 million on improvements, because it had failed to deliver on promises it made a year ago when it became the first private rail passenger operator.

Mr O'Brien's move is seen as a response to criticism this week by the House of Commons' public accounts committee, which called on him to give more information on penalties for under-performing companies. He and SWT are due before the transport select committee next week.

SWT has been unable to run a full service of 1,500 trains a day since it made 70 drivers redundant in January, in a move the Government described as "inept." Mr O'Brien said he was publishing a draft enforcement order because he thought SWT could breach its franchise agreement in the current four weeks by cancelling more than 1.5 per cent of its trains. He said: "Passengers have suffered an unacceptable level of cancellations in recent weeks. My priority is to see services restored to normal."

The possibility of SWT losing its franchise would occur later, if the company was fined and yet still failed to run 97.5 per cent of services. The current transgression is the company's third in less than a year.

A commitment by SWT to invest an extra £1 million, included spending £500,000 on station improvements and £250,000 on train reliability. Mr O'Brien said he was "most disappointed" that SWT had failed to deliver all it had promised under its original franchise plan.

SWT's managing director, Brian Cox, said it been shown "a yellow card but a red card is a long way off." He said the company very much regretted the inconvenience to passengers, but planned to have a full service running again by April 1.

The Transport Secretary, Sir George Young, said the move showed the Government's determination to hold train operators to their contracts, and take firm steps when they failed to come up to scratch. But Keith Bill, national secretary of Save Our Railways, said that Stagecoach, which owns SWT, had "dismally failed" to show what it could do and that the fine would have the same effect as "a peashooter on an elephant".

Andrew Smith, Labour's shadow transport secretary, said that SWT was still getting £200,000 a week of taxpayers' money for services it was not running. By the time Mr O'Brien had taken a decision on enforcement, SWT would have made more money out of not running services than it was liable to in fines.

Passengers

One man's mutiny forces train outfit to toe the lines

THE bulldog spirit of one man encouraged 100 rail passengers to hijack a delayed South West Trains service at Salisbury, Wiltshire, and persuade the driver to take it on to Exeter, *writes Keith Harper*.

John Taylor, owner of a wildlife park near Crewkerne, Somerset, held open the automatic doors of the 6.35pm train from Waterloo on Thursday to prevent the train moving off into the sidings, after irate passengers had been told to expect a 100-mile diversion via Bristol.

While a crowd beseiged the stationmaster's office, Mr Taylor saw the driver preparing to pull out of the station. "I knew that the railway rules forbid a train to leave with the doors open. I was a bit worried because I might have been arrested, but this is what people have got to do."

John Taylor, who put his foot down — and rallied a crowd

Mr Taylor said: "The passengers were typically British and a bit reluctant to get involved at first. But they soon jumped on. After about half an hour, the company agreed to let the train continue and a huge cheer went up."

He had just reached for his mobile to ring up his old school friend, Sir Robert Horton, chairman of Railtrack, when the train got permission to leave, after two drivers volunteered. "The passengers were stoical, but once one or two got back on the train, the rest just followed," he said.

SWT said it ran a special train from Salisbury to Exeter, but it had not heard about any protest.

Bosses

Stagecoach siblings built £400m empire on dad's pay-off

A BROTHER and sister business relationship has turned Stagecoach, which owns South West Trains, into one of Britain's largest transport undertakings, *writes Keith Harper*.

Brian Souter, whose father was a bus driver for 40 years until being made redundant 14 years ago, is now a multi-millionaire since he and his sister, Ann Gloag — voted 1990 Businesswoman of the Year — used their father's £25,000 redundancy money to start their company with two second-hand coaches operating on a single route between Dundee and London.

After qualifying as a chartered accountant, he saw the opportunities offered by the 1980 Transport Act, which deregulated long-distance coach and bus services. He and Mrs Gloag, a trained nurse, set up in business, financing early acquisitions through family capital and bank facilities.

Stagecoach supremos Brian Souter and Ann Gloag

Luxury double-deck coaches were introduced and new express services offered between Scottish cities. The Perth-based company's big expansion came when the National Bus Company was privatised in 1985. Stagecoach made its mark by becoming the first company to acquire an NBC subsidiary, buying three companies in Hampshire, Cumbria and the Midlands.

It now has an annual turnover of more than £400 million, employs 20,000 staff worldwide and operates 7,000 buses and coaches.

Mr Souter has another rail franchise, the small line in the Isle of Wight, but says that if some of the other new operators fail to deliver he may step in to run them himself.

Deputy head accused of murder and deception

Billie-Jo's foster father charged

Luke Harding

THE foster father of 13-year-old Billie-Jo Jenkins was charged yesterday with her murder, a month after she was bludgeoned to death in the back garden of the family home.

Sion Jenkins, aged 39, a deputy headmaster, appeared before a special sitting of Hastings magistrates' court and was remanded in custody for a week. He was also charged with deception.

Wearing a blue checked cotton shirt, navy blazer and beige trousers, he sat impassively through the hearing, occasionally bowing his head.

He was led into a glass-fronted cell in the court by two police officers. Antony Banham, prosecuting, said Mr Jenkins was charged with the murder of Billie-Jo on February 15 this year. "Also, there is a charge that between December 10, 1991, and March 14, 1997, he dishonestly obtained for himself employment by deception, namely falsely representing his academic qualifications and teaching experience."

Sion Jenkins: remanded in custody

Mr Jenkins spoke only to confirm his name, date of birth and address. His solicitor, Brendan Salsbury, opposed an application for remand in custody.

Billie-Jo died after being hit with an 18 in metal tent spike as she painted the patio doors at the family home in Hastings. Mr Jenkins was first arrested last month, spending 35 hours in custody before being released on police bail.

He and his social worker wife, Lois, 35, began fostering Billie-Jo five years ago. They have four natural daughters.

Mr Jenkins had been due to be appointed head of William Parker School, a boys' comprehensive where he has been deputy head since 1992. He has been on compassionate leave since the murder.

Scottish 'freedom fighter' jailed by Dublin court

David Sharrock
Ireland Correspondent

THE Scottish National Liberation Army's founder and leader, a former British soldier, was jailed for two years in Dublin's Special Criminal Court yesterday.

Adam Busby, aged 48, who has two grandchildren, has lived in Dublin for years, claiming to be the leader of the SNLA. He pleaded guilty to sending a "message of menacing character" to the Press Association and the Daily Record in Glasgow in 1995.

Other charges against Busby of having improvised incendiary devices which were then addressed to the Labour leader, Tony Blair, and the shadow Scottish secretary, George Robertson, in 1995, were dropped.

Thou shalt not steal, mostly, says priest

Gary Younge

THE Gospel according to the Reverend John Papworth would be a curious work: literally, a book of revelations where the devil could be found in a supermarket, and the commandment "Thou Shalt Not Steal" has a rider — "except from superstores".

He says: "I would have no moral compunction about taking things from giant stores without paying for them. It is not stealing. It is a reallocaton of resources which is badly needed.

"I wouldn't encourage people to go shoplifting, but I think it is perfectly justifiable if they do."

Mr Papworth, aged 75, a retired priest from St John's Wood, London, is a veteran campaigner against huge supermarkets, which he believes are destroying community life and putting temptation in the way of people who cannot afford their goods.

In the tradition of 18th century pamphleteers, he uses a tiny journal, called Fourth World Review, to warn the world of the evils of political and economic gigantism.

Mr Papworth admits he "pinched" things when he was a child, but said that that was wrong because it was from a small, local shop.

Earlier in the week, he told senior police at an anti-crime meeting in his area that taking things from supermarkets was "quite right".

"People are subjected to this barrage of propaganda for an abundance of wares. What are they supposed to do?" he says.

A maverick of long standing, he was once a member of the Labour but has recently joined Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party and wears the badge (upside down) along with his dog collar.

> 'You can only have a moral relationship with another person'

He agrees with the commandment "thou shall not steal", but says the rule does not apply to taking things from supermarkets. "You can only have a moral relationship with another person. You can't have a moral relationship with a thing. I don't see it as a crime at all.

His comments were swiftly disowned by the Church yesterday. A spokesman for the Bishop of London said: "He is merely a retired priest and he represents himself."

Wheel bay stowaway given stay on deportation

IMMIGRATION authorities yesterday gave an asylum-seeker who survived a 10-hour flight hidden in the wheel bay of a Boeing 747 a one-month reprieve while psychiatric reports are prepared.

An Immigration Appeal hearing over Pardeep Saini's appeal against a refusal to grant him refuge in Britain was adjourned. Mr Saini, aged 22, survived the journey from Delhi despite the high altitude, with temperatures as low as -60c and a lack of oxygen. His younger brother, Vijay, aged 18, died of hypothermia before his body fell out of the landing gear bay and plunged 2,000 feet to earth as the plane prepared to land at Heathrow last October. Mr Saini was discovered staggering across the airport tarmac. Relatives say he was too traumatised to give evidence during his first Home Office interview, which took place just over 24 hours later.

His counsel, Daya Mann, told the hearing in London: "He has had a traumatic experience and is undergoing psychiatric treatment. I ask for the hearing to be adjourned so that psychiatric reports on him can be completed that will indicate whether the appellant was of sound mind at the time of the original interview." Doctors believe Mr Saini might have survived his ordeal because of a medical phenomenon — that the extreme cold put his body into a form of suspended animation.

Russia's price for Nato deal

David Hearst in Moscow

RUSSIA insisted yesterday that the three Baltic states and all former Soviet republics be excluded from the process of Nato enlargement if there is to be an agreement with the alliance.

Staking out Russia's position before next week's crucial summit with Bill Clinton in Helsinki, President Boris Yeltsin said: "Our categoric condition is that the Baltics and CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] must not be drawn into Nato in any form."

He also criticised a tour this week by the Nato secretary-general, Javier Solana, of newly independent Central Asian states.

Mr Yeltsin said that he and Mr Clinton, in a recent telephone conversation, committed themselves to finding a compromise, but he added that the "security" of the Russian Federation would not be sacrificed.

Russia's foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, an experienced and skilful negotiator, is preparing to fly to Washington to tie up in advance much of the summit detail. It was not clear whether Mr Yeltsin's hard line was purely for domestic consumption.

But his comments will not improve Moscow's already tense relations with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and will upset other members of the commonwealth. They want to make a decision on Nato independently of the Kremlin's diktat.

The three Baltic states have applied to join the alliance and believe they will be admitted in the second or third wave of membership.

Western diplomats, while privately conceding Moscow's arguments about the large ethnic Russian population of the three states, cannot publicly rule out giving the Baltics Nato membership.

The US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, one of the leading proponents of Nato enlargement, has opposed Moscow's wish to have the Baltics or Ukraine act as buffer states.

Before her recent visit to Moscow, she wrote in the Economist: "When we say that the first new members will not be the last, we mean it ... After all, if Russia wishes to be part of an undivided Europe, then it cannot look at countries like Poland or Estonia or Ukraine as a buffer zone that separates Russia from Europe."

Mr Yeltsin said the forthcoming summit would be the hardest yet in US-Russian relations, and revealed that Washington had tried to buy Russia's acquiesence by offering $4 billion investment if it signed a treaty with Nato.

He told Russian journalists: "The US was willing to invest $4 billion in the Russian economy, counting on a change of our approach to Nato. I am categorically against such an attitude.

"If in Helsinki we fail to agree on something, political jingoism should not be built on it; we have passed that stage."

Despite the posturing, Mr Yeltsin badly needs a breakthrough at Helsinki. He has already begun a political offensive against the communist and nationalist opposition by dismissing his government and putting a controversial privatiser, Anatoly Chubais, in joint charge of selecting a new "reformist" team.

Last night he signed an order restructuring the government, but said the names of the appointees would only be announced when he flew to Helsinki.

The idea is to create a set of ministerial portfolios closer to the model of Western government departments than the old Soviet system based on branches of industry. Domestic reaction will depend on how far Mr Chubais's unpopular men are seen to dominate the cabinet.

The state duma went ahead with the preparation of a law establishing a medical commission to judge Mr Yeltsin's continued fitness for office.

The nationalist General Alexander Lebed, Mr Yeltsin's main opponent, predicted that a national one-day strike called for the end of the month could lead to civil disturbances.

Hopes rise for agreement on new EU treaty

Robin Cook says a Labour government expects to sign up in Amsterdam. **John Palmer** in Strasbourg reports

THE prospects for the adoption of a new European Union treaty at June's Amsterdam summit have been boosted by signals that Paris, Bonn and the British Labour Party are ready to compromise.

The Dutch presidency of the EU hailed as a breakthrough a declaration by the shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, that an incoming Labour government expects to conclude a new treaty in the weeks between a general election and the summit on June 16 and 17.

Three major issues remain to be resolved. The British government — with Labour backing — is strongly resisting proposals by France and Germany to bring the Western European Union (WEU), the defence arm of the EU, directly under the control of EU heads of government.

The Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, said this week that the integration of the WEU into the EU posed a threat to the unity and effectiveness of Nato. Britain accepts that the two bodies must work more closely, but wants a "Chinese Wall" to separate EU foreign policy and WEU reponsibility for military action.

However, even John Major's government now agrees that EU common foreign and security policy should be strengthened, with the transfer of responsibility for new foreign and security policy proposals from national capitals to Brussels. The German government now accepts that all major decisions on security policy will still be taken by unanimity, leaving majority voting for the implementation of detail.

For its part, the French government has abandoned its opposition to the EU having greater powers over immigration and external frontiers.

"The new, more constructive French approach on internal security, justice and immigration has made possible a real breakthrough in the inter-governmental conference treaty negotiations," one senior Dutch diplomat said yesterday.

There is still no agreement on how to redistribute the votes held by member states in the Council of Ministers to give a bigger voice to the more populous countries. This issue is, in turn, linked to determined resistence by the smaller countries to any future moves to have them give up their right to a commissioner of their own.

But as a report by the European Commission this week envisaged the planned enlargement of the EU to perhaps 30 or more states in the next 10 years, there could be more commissioners than jobs for them to do. The Commission has suggested capping its own membership to the present 20 until a review in 2005. This would mean Britain and the other larger countries losing their right to a second commissioner from 2000.

When foreign ministers meet in Rome later this month to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome and the launch of the European Community, they hope to "break the back" of the remaining major obstacles.

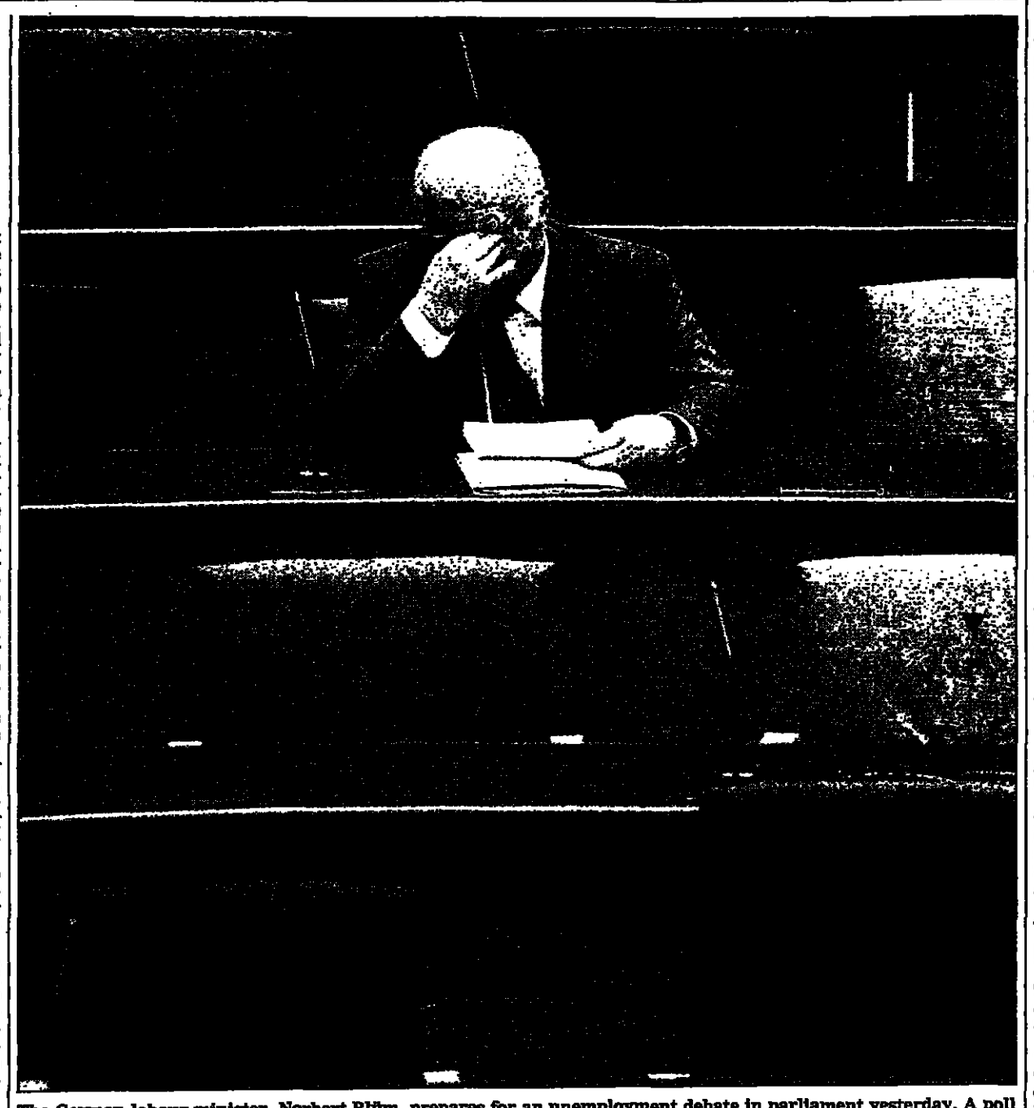
The Rome meeting will also spell out the readiness of the other EU countries to allow Britain to retain its own frontier controls.

But, in return, the British government will be expected not to veto the transfer to the EU of key aspects of immigration and visa policy — including the running of the Schengen agreement, which aims to eliminate internal borders between most EU countries.

Speaking in Brussels last week, Mr Cook identified the issue of border controls as the most important problem to be resolved by an incoming Labour government. He said an agreement allowing Britain to keep its present controls would open the way to an overall treaty deal. He also promised that a Labour government would look with sympathy at the case for more majority voting and greater law-making powers for the European Parliament.

"As the Union expands to perhaps 30 countries, we cannot all go on clutching our national veto on all issues. This would make urgently needed reform more difficult," he declared.

"What Mr Cook said is very good news indeed," said the Dutch minister for European affairs, Michiel Patijn. "It means that, as we always hoped, we will be able to reach political agreement on a new treaty in June."



The German labour minister, Norbert Blüm, prepares for an unemployment debate in parliament yesterday. A poll showed three-quarters of Germans backed a deal made with miners to avoid mass layoffs PHOTOGRAPH: HERMANN KNIPPERTZ

'Luther Blisset' still finds Italy a trial

James Tandy in Rome

LUTHER Blisset, the former Watford striker, is on trial in Italy for resisting arrest and insulting a public official. Or to be more accurate, four Luther Blissets are in the dock.

The trial of four Italian youths found travelling without tickets on a night tram last summer began in Rome on Thursday. When asked by police to identify themselves, all four gave the name Luther Blisset, in memory of the black British football player still remembered in Italy for his disastrous 1982 season with AC Milan.

According to their lawyer, when the four were apprehended on the night of June 17 1995, they were staging an itinerant party with improvised music and dancing on the tram. The peaceful "socio-cultural happening" was being broadcast live on a local leftwing radio station, Radio Citta Futura.

In the words of the Blissets themselves: "The forces of law and order arrived and, incapable of understanding the event, decided immediately to repress it, even firing shots into the air."

The four are members of a loosely-knit anarchic youth movement that has adopted the identity of Luther Blisset as a cover for a series of hoaxes and practical jokes.

"The group considers identity to be the prison of the self," said Checchino Antonini, an editor at Radio Citta Futura. "Identity and fixity are the enemies of communication and have to be combated by nomadism and collective identity. When the conductor asked for their tickets, they replied that a collective identity does not travel with a ticket."

He said the group had selected Luther Blisset, once known by British fans as "Mr Mistake", as a cultural icon because his career in Italy had been so unlucky. Blisset was "famous for missing open goals and for the inexorable precision with which he would find the goalpost," according to an unforgiving account in an Italian newspaper.

The prosecutor, Gloria Attanasio, has failed to see the funny side, however, and the trial has been postponed until December.

World news in brief

Chinese MPs rebel over crime policy

CHINA'S usually docile parliament expressed open dissatisfaction with the government's battle against crime yesterday, when 40 per cent of its deputies rejected a report from the procurator-general.

Of 2,750 National People's Congress deputies voting by secret ballot, 675 rejected the annual report and 390 abstained. It was the highest ever proportion of protest votes recorded by the parliament, which has yet to reject any legislation or government appointment set before it.

Deputies also showed their dissatisfaction with the work of China's top judge as 881 of them — nearly one-third — chose not to support a separate report by the supreme court president, Ren Jianxin. Public opinion polls show rising crime is the chief grievance of many Chinese.

Meanwhile China's president, Jiang Zemin, announced yesterday he is to sign an agreement next month which will reduce troops along the border with Russia and three Central Asian states. — *Reuter, Beijing.*

Iranian jet crashes

AN Iranian military plane with 86 people on board has crashed in a mountainous region in north-eastern Iran. Government officials said there was no news of survivors.

The C-130 Hercules transport plane crashed 24 miles from the city of Mashhad on Thursday, according to the official news agency Irna. State-run Tehran Radio said the pilot reported engine failure before the plane disappeared into mountains near Neyshabour. Search teams had been sent to the area but had not yet found wreckage of the plane, which was flying to Mashhad from the south-western city of Dezful. — *Reuter, Tehran.*

Killer attempts suicide

MARTIN Bryant, who killed 35 people in a shooting spree in Tasmania last year, has twice attempted suicide, a prison officer claimed yesterday.

The nursing chief at Hobart's Risdon Prison said in a radio interview that Bryant had first tried to strangle himself with bandages, then later attempted to choke himself by swallowing a rolled-up tube of toothpaste. Prison officers thwarted both attempts, which were made in a suicide-proof cell in the prison hospital. — *AP, Canberra.*

Bomb blast hits Punjab

AT least seven people were killed in a bomb blast in Punjab yesterday.

Indian police said the explosion near a busy railway station in Jalandhar also injured 10 people, but claimed it was too early to say who was responsible. The blast is the first in the region since the pro-Sikh Akali Dal party took power after local elections last month. — *Reuter, Chandigarh.*

Policeman in court shooting

A GERMAN policeman shot dead his estranged common-law wife and seriously injured her lawyer in a Frankfurt court yesterday in what appeared to be a dispute over alimony payments.

The man pulled out a handgun and fired eight shots at the woman and her female lawyer before giving himself up to police. His ex-partner died shortly afterwards in the court and the lawyer was taken to hospital with life-threatening injuries. Neither the man nor the two victims were named. — *Reuter, Frankfurt.*

Mobutu to return to Zaire

ZAIRE'S President Mobutu Sese Seko will return home from France on Monday, a senior member of his party said yesterday.

Banza Mukalayi, the deputy president of the Popular Revolutionary Movement, said it was not clear whether Mr Mobuto, who had prostate cancer surgery in Switzerland last August and has spent most of his time in Europe since then, would return to the Zairean capital Kinshasa or to his jungle palace at Gbadolite. — *Reuter, Kinshasa.*

Fears of typhoid epidemic

THE World Health Organisation expressed alarm yesterday over an outbreak of typhoid fever in Tajikistan which it fears could spread further.

The United Nations agency says it now believes the number of typhoid cases in the central Asian country could soar from 5,000 to 60,000. The disease has claimed 48 lives since January. The source of the outbreak is unclear, but water in the capital Dushanbe has not been treated for months because cash shortages forced the local chlorine factory to shut down. — *Reuter, Geneva.*

Saro-Wiwa's mother in talks

AN African team monitoring Nigeria's human rights record has met the mother of the executed author Ken Saro-Wiwa at her home in south-eastern Ogoniland.

A Ghanaian professor, Victor Danqua, who led the three-member delegation, said yesterday the meeting was fruitful.

The delegation also met 19 Ogoni youths accused of the same murders for which Saro-Wiwa and eight others were hanged in 1995. The youths have been detained since 1994. — *Reuter, Abuja.*

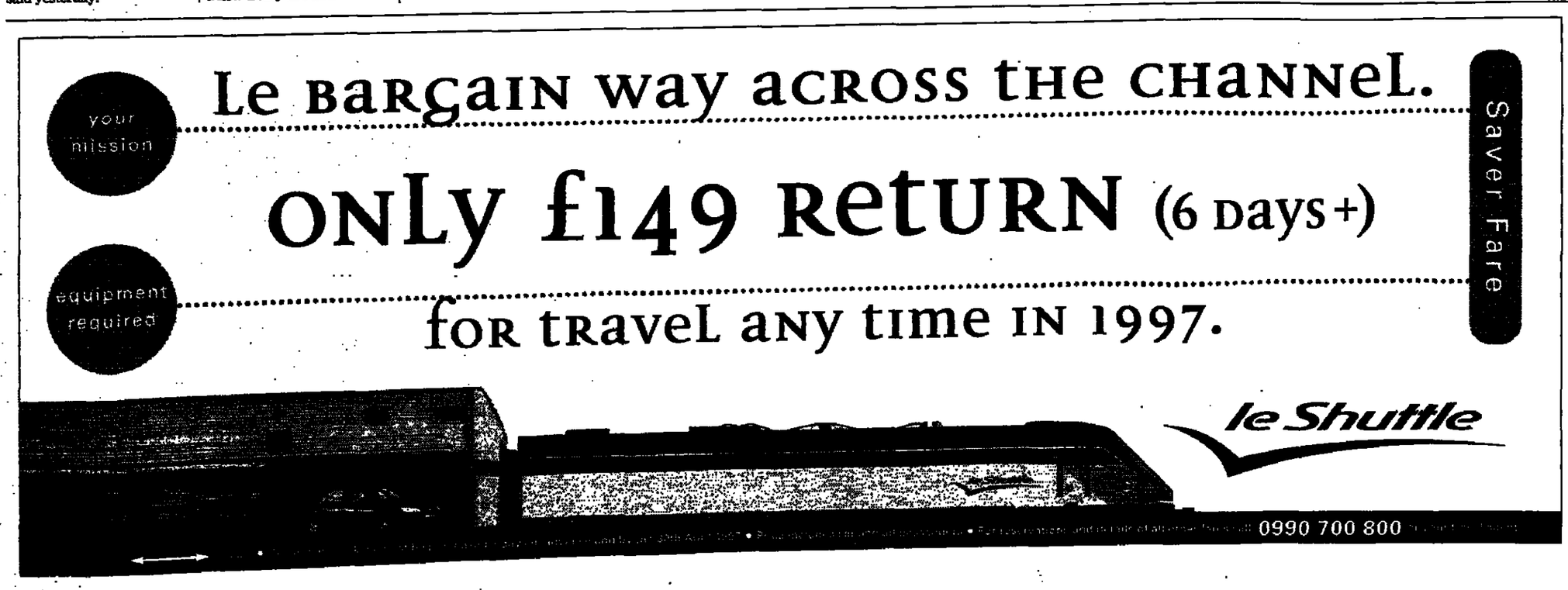
Hanging on the telephone

ROMANIANS are used to waiting a long time for the state telephone company to install a line, but after 20 years Constantin Coltea could hold on no longer.

In 1977 he filled out forms to get a line, but the response from Romtelecom only came this month. Coltea died last year.

In its letter, the company said his request would be dropped if he failed to accept the offer within 15 days. Coltea's widow, Caliopi, said she could not afford the line on her monthly pension.

Lidia Toboc, a Romtelecom spokeswoman, said that in urban areas where few lines exist, applicants have to wait an average five years before they get a line. — *AP, Bucharest.*



'Nothing will stop' Israeli settlement

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

A DAY after a Jordanian army driver shot and killed seven Israeli schoolgirls, the Israeli government yesterday resolved to press ahead with plans to build the new Har Homa Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem, starting on Monday.

The cabinet's decision, which has further raised tensions in the Middle East, came despite warnings from security officials who fear a new Palestinian intifada if the bulldozers start work.

"I am building Har Homa this week and nothing is going to stop me," the prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, told Ma'ariv newspaper.

The cabinet session was overshadowed by the massacre of the teenagers on the Jordan River island of Naharayim.

In Amman, the information minister, Nasser Lawzi, said military police were still interrogating Sergeant Ahmed Mustapha, aged 26, about the massacre but added that there was no evidence so far to link him to any political group. Mr Lawzi said Sgt Mustapha would probably be tried by a military court.

The soldier's mother yesterday appealed to King Hussein for mercy on her son's behalf. She said he was mentally ill.

King Hussein, who has cut short a visit to Spain, is expected to visit the bereaved schoolgirls' families either tonight or tomorrow.

Har Homa is at the top of the agenda for this morning's international conference in Gaza, instigated by the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat. Mr Arafat, angered by Israel's decision earlier this month to pull out of only 9 per cent of the West Bank, hopes to rally support from the US and other states.

He claims that under the Oslo accords, which envisage a three-phase Israeli withdrawal, he was supposed to receive at least 30 per cent of the land currently occupied by the Israelis.

Comparatively low-ranking representatives of the US, Russia, Europe, Japan and the Arab world are attending the conference. The US has sent its consul-general in east Jerusalem, Edward Abington, who yesterday delivered a personal message to Mr Arafat from President Clinton.

Israel and its allies in the US Congress are strongly opposed to the gathering. On Thursday Republicans told Mr Clinton that US participation was "a mistake".

President Clinton is carried on to Air Force One at West Palm Beach airport yesterday after he tore a ligament during a fall PHOTOGRAPH: MARTA LAVANDIER

Pope challenges unholy US sanctions policy

Private view

Victoria Brittain

THE United States is now openly at loggerheads with the Vatican over the Pope's decision this week to open diplomatic relations with Tripoli — a move which may point the way towards the lifting of US-inspired sanctions against Libya.

The Pope's decision, despite months of intense private lobbying by Washington, follows his warm reception of Fidel Castro in Rome last autumn, and the subsequent announcement of a forthcoming papal visit to that other US pariah, Cuba.

In both cases the impetus comes from the Pope's wish to leave no constituency unvisited. There are 4.5 million Catholics in Cuba, though only 50,000 in Muslim Libya. But the political effects of such a high-level public figure breaking the isolation are potentially far-reaching. Most worrying for the Americans is that the moves threaten to undermine the sanctions policy which has been used to beat both countries for so long.

There are no figures on the effects on Libya of sanctions, forced through the United Nations in the wake of the 1988 bombing of a US airliner over Lockerbie and yesterday renewed for a further 90 days by the Security Council. But a new report on the agonies of Cuban children in hospitals deprived of drugs, and the near-collapse of the Iraqi health service with the deaths of 4,500 children a month from hunger and disease, are reminders that UN sanctions kill people while doing nothing to dislodge leaders unpopular in the West.

The UN sanctions, including an embargo on flights to and from Libya, were imposed for Tripoli's failure to hand over two Libyan suspects for trial in the US or Britain for the Lockerbie bombing, which killed 270 people. The evidence produced by the US and British governments to back the charge that Libya was behind the bombing was inconclusive and contradictory, with Britain at first pointing the finger at Iranian-financed and Syrian-based terrorists.

In its recent efforts to persuade the Vatican not to go ahead with its Libyan initiative, the US shifted the focus to more nebulous ground. The new line was that Washington was "very concerned about support for terrorism, and the suspicion that Libya is seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction".

On January 12, foreign ministers representing the Organisation of African Unity and the Arab League pressed the Security Council swiftly to resolve "a dispute which has continued for too long", arguing that it was really a quarrel between the Libyan leadership on one hand and the US, Britain and France on the other.

Last month ministers from 52 African countries demonstrated their irritation at the UN's inaction by making the awkward journey to Tripoli by road from Tunisia, or by sea from Malta, for an OAU meeting in the Libyan capital.

Of course no one in Washington cares about the views of African leaders, but the US may soon wish it had saved face by resolving the situation earlier, before the powerful Catholic network starts work on world opinion and reveals the human suffering caused by its policy.

Pakistan's tug-of-love bride goes missing

Phil Goodwin in Islamabad

A PAKISTANI woman at the centre of a tug-of-love battle between her father and her husband has gone missing, hours after leaving a refuge where she has spent the past 11 months.

Saima Waheed became a national symbol for the triumph of true love last week when the High Court in Lahore turned down an attempt by her father to have her marriage declared invalid. He said she had gone against his wishes and thereby disobeyed Islamic teaching.

She was placed in a women's refuge as a ward of court during the case, but allowed to join her husband, Arshad Ahmad, last week.

She remained at the refuge, saying she was still receiving threats from her father and conservative Islamic groups that made her fear for her life.

But on Thursday she decided to leave. Accompanied by her lawyer and her husband's lawyer, Abdi Saqi, she went to law offices to sign papers confirming that she was leaving of her own choice.

Accounts of what happened next differ, but everyone is agreed on one thing: they do not know where she is.

Her husband held a news conference yesterday and accused his lawyer of abducting her. He said Mr Saqi had developed a relationship with his wife during the long court case, and had lured her away. He accused him of being part of a plot by Ms Waheed's parents to get her back.

The lawyer denied the allegations, saying he had escorted her back to her husband.

Ms Waheed's father also summoned journalists to say he had nothing to do with her disappearance. He said that if suicide were not a sin under Islam, he would have killed himself.

Ms Waheed's lawyer, Asma Jehangir, said she last saw her client driving off.

Film stars join campaign to save Mexico's whales

Grey whales, under renewed threat, have only recently returned from the brink of extinction PHOTOGRAPH: NORBERT WU

Phil Gunson
Latin America correspondent

A PLAN to build the world's largest sea-salt plant near the last pristine breeding ground for the grey whale has sparked off a Mexican protest campaign spearheaded by film stars.

Pierce Brosnan of 007 fame and actress Glenn Close have visited the whales and their young in a national park to echo local concern over the project, which involves the Mexican government and the Mitsubishi corporation in a joint venture known as Essa.

The whales, which recently returned from the brink of extinction, must annually make the huge trek from the Arctic to the Baja California peninsula to give birth.

Sheltered lagoons further north can no longer be used because of human activity, and the journey is now so long that scientists say at least half the calves are born in open waters, where chances of survival are reduced.

The San Ignacio lagoon, which forms part of Latin America's largest biosphere reserve, has remained almost undisturbed except for small-scale fishing and eco-tourism.

Now, however, Essa plans to use loud diesel engines to pump 6,000 gallons of water per second out of the lagoon, creating salt flats that will produce seven million tons of salt a year.

According to Mexico's "Group of 100" environmental lobbyists and the Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC) of the United States, this could destroy the whales' habitat. In addition to the noise and other pollution, a mile-long pier for transporting the salt to ships will lie in the whales' migration path, according to an environmental consultant, Mark Spalding.

An environmental impact statement prepared in 1994 was rejected by the government's ecology institute for not dealing properly with the whale issue.

However, with a new statement now being prepared, opponents fear environmental watchdogs may not be strong enough to resist the pressure to implement the scheme.

The Mexican government owns 51 per cent of Essa, and Mitsubishi the remaining 49 per cent. Thus the company chairman is also the trade minister, creating a potential conflict of interests.

Joaquin Ardura, Essa's technical director, said the threat to the whales was minimal. He pointed out that the company had been operating for 40 years in the nearby Ojo de Lievre lagoon, where the whales also calve, and said numbers were at record levels. "If you're in the middle of the channel, you can't hear anything," he said. "The flora and fauna here has increased since we created wetlands out of barren soil."

As for the pier, it would be 15 miles from the mouth of the lagoon and mounted on steel legs, allowing the whales to pass underneath.

Robert Kennedy, legal counsel for the NRDC, said environmentalists did not agree. "I have flown over the existing facility and it is an industry.

"We don't want to see the whales in the middle of an industry," he said.

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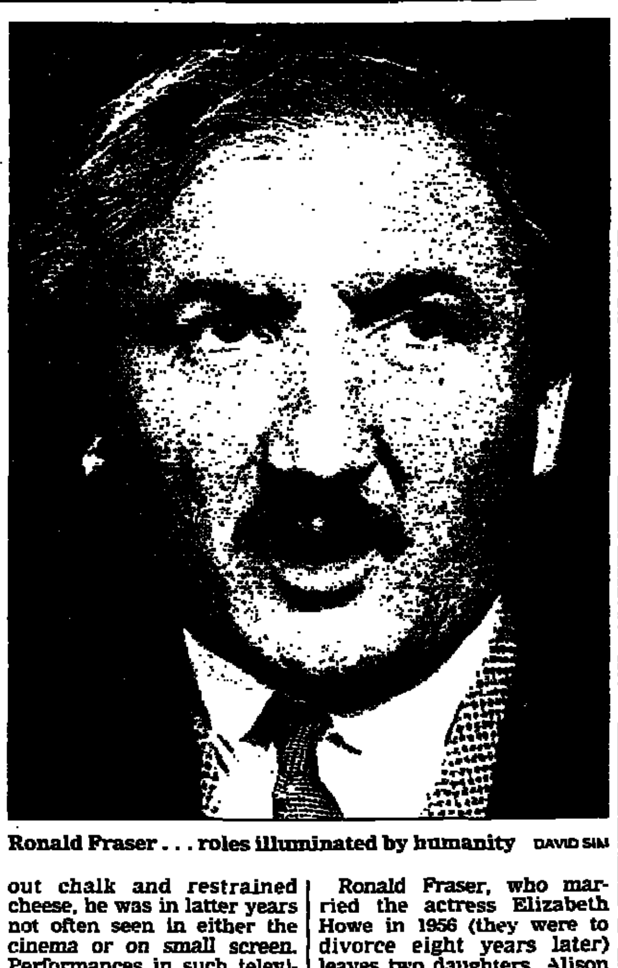
Ronald Fraser

A last wave from the verandah



Ronald Fraser . . . roles illuminated by humanity DAVID SIM

IF ONE television and film character actor more than any other was fashioned by nature to represent the decay of the British Empire and national world sway, it was Ronald Fraser, who has died in hospital of internal bleeding, aged 66.

Too short to be patrician, though aspiring to it, and with a round perspiring face like a squashed grape with a twitchy slit for a mouth, he was ideally fitted to play the old-school-tie colonial well past his sell-by date, the irritating rather than offensive mess bar bore, the cheerful junior officer hiding social or emotional fears behind bonhomie, the misappropriator of regimental funds who died gallantly in the last reel.

There was a trace of the real man in some of this: at one point his "old boy" and "my dear chap" gregariousness, fuelled by vodka, had got out of control — though eventually he was to be seen in one of his Hampstead locals, the Sir Richard Steele, drinking tonic water.

One TV director who worked with him on the series *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*, in which he played an unpredictable ship's purser, said of him that he was the sort of "delightful" man with whom it was dangerously easy to relax at the bar after shooting — "Except that you would soon find you were squiffy. He wasn't but you were."

Fraser, son of a Scots builder in Ashton-under-Lyme, Lancashire, did his National Service in the Seaforth Highlanders in North Africa. Like so many would-be thespians, he made his service more congenial by acting. He found his experience in Terence Rattigan's *French Without Tears*, in Benghazi so "elating" that he decided to make acting his career.

After training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1953, he joined Sir Donald Wolfit's company. Some of his friends and associates deny that he was ever anything so humble as Sir Donald's dresser, but Wolfit was such an egomaniac that it is entirely possible that he used some of his actors as dressers or, even, stage sweepers.

Beginning his film and TV career in 1954, often playing rather more downbeat parts than he would later be associated with — such as crooks and other moustached heavies — Fraser was in a series of distinguished or at least interesting films like the Tony Hancock *Punch and Judy Man*, Bryan Forbes's *The Whisperers* and, very advanced for its time, Frank Marcus's lesbian triangle *The Killing Of Sister George*.

It took him some time to become a national figure, but he became much loved in the television series *The Misfit*, playing the ex-colonial Basil Allenby-Johnson, nicknamed Badger, whose colonial manner and blimpish views concealed real humanity.

That humanity was the hallmark of most of his work: the people he played were often pretentious, weak or risible, but seldom mere contemptible caricatures. He might play a character as puffed-up at work, domestically craven and socially insecure, but there was something about him as an underlying personality that successfully appealed for sympathy.

His death robbed him of playing a part that might have been written for him. In September he was due to begin shooting the film *I Love, You Love, Me Love* in Liverpool. He would have played Jasper, a Marxist aristocrat reduced to driving a Rolls-Royce as a taxi. His agent Rebecca Blond felt he would have been marvellously funny in it, since a mischievous subversiveness under an elegant exterior was the essence of much of his comedy.

Though he had recently appeared on the Chris Evans TV show *TFI, Friday*, an unlikely combination of let-it-all-hang-out chalk and restrained cheese, he was in latter years not often seen in either the cinema or on small screen. Performances in such television dramas as *Pennies From Heaven*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *Fortunes Of War*, and some Lovejoy and Taggart episodes were largely unknown to a new generation of viewers.

Ronald Fraser, who married the actress Elizabeth Howe in 1956 (they were to divorce eight years later) leaves two daughters, Alison and Fiona.

Dennis Barker

Ronald Fraser, actor, born April 11, 1930, died March 13, 1997

Frank Brennan

Defying the auld enemy

Brennan . . . virtually unbeatable in the air

FRANK Brennan, who has died aged 72, exemplified the showbiz myth of the young performer who goes on a kid and comes off a star.

The stage was Hampden Park, Glasgow, in front of a massive crowd when, as a very young and largely untried centre-half with the unfashionable Aidrieonians club, he found himself pitchforked at the last moment into the Scotland team to play England in the April 1946 victory international.

Throughout the war years, Scotland had played second fiddle to an England team spearheaded by the big centre-forward, Tommy Lawton. Yet it was Lawton whom the tyro Brennan must now mark. He did so with resplendent success. Lawton was virtually played out of the game, and Scotland won with a solitary goal by Jimmie Delaney.

From that moment, Brennan was on the map. At over 6ft 2ins and more than 14 stone, he was virtually unbeatable in the air, and more mobile on the ground than his bulk might have suggested. His positional sense was exceptional.

Despite his size, and muscularity, he was described by an almanac as "one of football's gentlemen".

England beckoned, but it was surprising that his first English League season, 1946-47, was spent with Second Division Newcastle who picked him up for a mere £8,000. The following season United, runners-up to Birmingham City, were promoted. Brennan and Newcastle would remain in the First Division for the rest of his career.

He played a salient part in their early 1950s FA Cup successes. In the 1951 final he had an excellent game against Blackpool, Stanley Matthews and all. It was a less arduous game at Wembley a year later against a depleted Arsenal.

For Scotland, Brennan won just seven full caps, the victory international not counting as an "official" one. The first came against Wales in October 1946, but competition from such players as the Rangers pair, George Young and Willie Woodburn, kept him out of the international side until 1953-54. After that he kept his place for all three home internationals, including the one against England at Wembley. His last cap, against England again, came where he had begun, at Hampden Park in April, 1954.

That season he missed only three League games for Newcastle, but the following season, no longer immune from injuries, he made only half a dozen First Division appearances. He was replaced by Bob Stokoe, a locally born player who soon became as great a favourite at Gallowgate as Brennan himself.

Curiously enough, of all the centre forwards that he played against, Brennan said the most difficult of them all was Derby County's long-forgotten Jack Lee.

On retirement, he opened a sports goods shop in Newcastle, incurring the wrath and rivalry of the club's chairman and former outside-left Stan Seymour, who was intent on monopolising sports goods retailing in the city, as he had so long dominated Newcastle United and its managers. It was sad to see such perpetual squabbling between two men who, in their day, had served the club so well.

Brennan was married, with three sons and three daughters.

Brian Glanville

Frank Brennan, footballer, born April 23, 1924; died March 5, 1997

Martin Kippenberger

Darker side of the miracle

Two faces of the artist . . . Kippenberger and *Dialogue With Youth*, the painting he made from a photograph of himself lying in hospital with a broken nose. His face is wrapped in bandages, with cartoon musical notes and champagne glasses floating around it

IN THE 1980s the German artist Martin Kippenberger, who has died from liver cancer aged 44, was a familiar, even legendary figure to young British artists because he refused to accept the normal rules of art. He could draw and paint very well but didn't think either activity was particularly better than taking photographs, recording rock music or composing lists of daft aphorisms.

He published a book of thoughts, *No Problem*. "We don't have problems with the Rolling Stones", one of the thoughts went, inexplicably. "Because we buy their guitars." There were other entries on such subjects as mousse au chocolat, politics and alcohol. "We drink, we fall down. No problem."

When I think of his work I think of a stream of odd, deliberately ugly-looking images and objects, both stupid and refined at the same time. For example, his mid-1980s sculpture consisted of a battered 1970s Bay City Rollers-type high-heeled boot standing on a cheap carpet. The carpet stood on a neatly trimmed section of hardboard, and the hardboard stood on a foam rubber stack. Or his realistic life-sized self portrait oil painting, naked except for a pair of large white Y-fronts (an ironic echo of a famous photo of Picasso), his nose scarred, his belly hanging out, his former youthful good looks now ruined by drink.

And I think of his jokes and songs and sayings, which were never particularly funny, tuneful or wise but always seemed to work as art. He once recorded a song in a mournful singalong Bavarian beer-hall style called *Yuppi Do*. The words go "Yuppi do, yuppi do, yuppi do" endlessly.

One of the last times I saw him was in a BBC studio when he was putting together a multi-media installation for a *Late Show* discussion. It was mid-morning, he was on his third Campari and orange juice, and he was sweating as he wrapped lengths of adhesive packaging tape round a wooden board. The carpenters had made a huge grey keyhole, through which you walked, and there was a bronze cast of a brandy bottle designed by Salvador Dali. Behind the bottle was the board, with each of the lengths of tape bearing the legend "I hold myself closed" in English, German and Spanish. It was called *View Onto A Misunderstanding*. I'm still not sure what it meant.

After studying in Hamburg he emerged in the late 1970s as an artist in Berlin where he opened the Buro Kippenberger which he mainly ran as a club with music and drinking. He started painting at that time, exhibiting rows of complicated, packed-looking pictures executed in styles ranging from abject kitsch to sophisticated high art abstraction. A lot of this work was a direct response to the fast turnover of imagery, ideas and slogans that existed in pop culture. (In the 1990s pop returned the compliment, when the Manic Street Preachers used his painting *Sympathetic Communist Girl*, and another, an image of a Chinese child drinking Coca-Colas, were used as publicity material.)

In the 1980s he became internationally well-known as the leader of a group of iconoclastic, Cologne-based artists whose work combined elements of punk, pop, dada and expressionism. He put on exhibitions in private galleries all over the world and was profiled on television and in print. He was more a salesman than an artist in the conventional sense, he said; he "passed on ideas."

SOME of his ideas are clear, some less so. A clear one is *Street Lamp for Drunks*, a real lamp-post from Venice altered so that its form is bendy and swaying, like an hallucination. A bit darker is *Dialogue With Youth*, the painting he made from a photograph of himself lying in hospital, his nose broken by punk girls who attacked him outside a bar one night. It shows his bruised and broken face wrapped in bandages, with cartoon musical notes and symbols for champagne glasses floating around it.

And then there's his heavily worked, encrusted painting of angular abstract shapes, called *However hard I look, I can't see the swastika*. That's a lot darker. He made it as a response to the careless criticism that he was a fascist because his art sometimes took very ugly things — like racism and sexism — as subject matters, but refused to offer easy answers.

"Embarrassment knows no bounds," he declared. He certainly embarrassed his fellow Germans, who sulked about political incorrectness while he poked fun at their liberal pieties. Kippenberger saw the world as imperfect, contradictory, full of compromises, awkwardnesses and hypocrisy. And he saw no reason why art shouldn't reflect that. It was not removed from, or above, the impurities and injustices of life.

When he was riding high financially in the art-boom 1980s he bought a Brazilian petrol station just for the pleasure of renaming it the Martin Bormann Gas Station. He made collages out of pictures cut from magazines showing grotesque and horrible intertwinings of crippled porn models, shiny consumer products — he was a child of Germany's post war economic miracle — and starving people in India. And he made a group of plaster sculptures in a Henry Moore style — abstract figures with holes in the middle — which he exhibited once in an exhibition called *Hunger*.

Kippenberger lived and worked for long periods in Los Angeles, Madrid and Seville. And he taught in art schools, building up a large and faithful student following. For a long time, museums resisted his work. But in recent years there have been a string of retrospectives, in Paris, Rotterdam, Geneva, Antwerp, and Moenchengladbach. And later this year his art will feature for the first time in Germany's most prestigious official contemporary art show, the *Documenta* in Kassel.

He is survived by a wife and daughter.

Matthew Collings

Martin Kippenberger, artist, born February 25, 1953: died March 9, 1997

Weekend Birthdays

THINK of **Ben Okri**, 38 today, as a contemporary simultaneously of George Orwell and of Homer. As a man who has lived where there are no safety nets, slept on the Embankment and seen the stars only as a promise of ice through a bitter night. What sounds like romance in his writing is the poetry of contrast and detail: of his father the railway clerk in a draughty bedsit in the dirty snows of Peckham, who demanded the boy speak Latin and read Virgil; of his mother the Ibo tribeswoman who talked-story of boys enjoying being turned into crocodiles. He has been given sixpence and put on the bus home by strangers in the remotest regions of East Croydon; and he has walked "100 miles to Lagos to learn something," He has read Ulysses sleeping rough in Charing Cross tube station and Jane Austen in Nigeria. He made his hero in *The Famished Road* a spirit who has taken human form, which is what he seems himself, walking about Trinity College, Cambridge, as a Fellow, with a green apple in one hand and a volume of great Renaissance letters of hard tenderness in the other. When his first novel was published, his father gathered the family elders to buy the boy a pen; "How many pens this will buy," said Ben when he won the Booker.

Today's other birthdays: **David Alton**, Liberal Democrat MP, 46; **Alex Bernstein**, former chairman, Granada Group, 61; **David Bryer**, director, Oxfam, 53; **Isobel Buchanan**, soprano, 43; **Ry Cooder**, folk and blues guitarist, 50; **Colin Croft**, cricketer, 44; **Frank Dobson**, MP, shadow environment spokesman, 58; **John Duttine**, actor, 48; **Prof John Gillingham**, neurosurgeon, 81; **Sunetra Gupta**, author, 32; **Deirdre Hutton**, chairman, Scottish Consumer Council, 48; **Mike Love**, Beach Boy, 53; **Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo**, chairman, TNT Europe, 73; **Prof Joan Mitchell**, political economist, 77; **Michael Moore**, chairman, NSPCC, 61; **Robert Nye**, novelist and poet, 58; **Frances Partridge**, diarist, 97; **Federico Pena**, US Transport Secretary, 50; **Sir Philip Powell**, CH, architect, 76; **Gavin Stamp**, architectural historian and writer, 49; **Cecil Taylor**, jazz pianist, 64; **Sir Roger Tomkys**, master, Pembroke College, Cambridge, 66.

Tomorrow's birthdays: **Ben Aris**, actor, 60; **Matthew Bannister**, director, BBC Radio, 40; **Sybille Bedford**, author, 86; **Teresa Berganza**, mezzo-soprano, 62; **Bernardo Bertolucci**, film director, 56; **Prof Roger Blamey**, national coordinator of guidelines for breast cancer treatment, 62; **"Ruby" Braff**, jazz cornet player, 70; **Joy Delhanty**, geneticist, 60; **Tommy Flanagan**, jazz pianist, 67; **Judith Hampson**, environmental scientist, 46; **Isabelle Huppert**, French actress, 42; **Prof Sir Ewart Jones**, chemist, 86; **Dr Sir Anthony Kenny**, philosopher, chairman, British Library, 66; **Jerry Lewis**, comedian, 71; **Christa Ludwig**, mezzo-soprano, 69; **Salim Malik**, cricketer, 34; **Leo McKern**, actor, 77; **Georgina Nayler**, chief executive, National Heritage Memorial Fund, 38; **Kate Nelligan**, actress, 46; **Roger Norrington**, conductor, 63; **Bridget Rowe**, editor, the People, 47.

Death Notices

BOALER, Kathleen on 7th March, peacefully at home aged 87. Cremation at Macclesfield Crematorium Monday 17th March at 3.00pm. Donations, in lieu of flowers to the Multiple Sclerosis Society. All enquiries L D Tideswell Funeral Director 01298 813165

GITTINGS, Jo. Writer and biographer (also under the name of Jo Manton), peacefully on 11th March at Westhampnett House, Chichester, aged 77 There will be a private family funeral, a memorial event will be held in East Dean on 6th September. Donations welcome to Voluntary Service Overseas, 317 Putney Bridge Rd, London SW15 2PN

JELLINEK, Katherine, on the 12th March at home in Beaconsfield Funeral at the Chilterns, Amersham at 12.30 on Thursday 20th March. Family flowers only. Donations to Cancer Research or to National Canine Defence League.

O'BRIEN Oswald, 6.4.28 - 9.3.97. Sadly missed by his much loved wife and son David, who was also his good friend All those who wished to remember his Socialism and friendship, please join Freda and David at St Augustine's Church, Darlington at 2.30pm on Tuesday 18th March. Flowers to Co-operative Funeral Service, Darlington

In Memoriam

JULIUS CAESAR. Born 12th July 100 BC Died 15 March 44 BC. "Thou art the ruins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times" Plantagenet Somerset Fry, born 3rd January 1931 AD died 10 September 1996 AD. Hath joined his great hero.

Births

PURDIE. To David and Andrea (née Pinnington), a son, Dominic Alexander, born 16.02.97 in Hackney.

TEAPE. Alex and Jeanette are proud to announce the birth of their twins, Rebecca Melvina Teape and Reece Marlon Teape, born on the 13.03.97, at 01:01 and 01:02.

■ To place your announcement telephone 0171 713 4567 or fax 0171 713 4129 between 9am and 3pm Mon-Fri

Face to Faith

God help you if you get in His way

Zaki Badawi

MY FIRST real encounter with the Jewish Bible occurred when I was an undergraduate at the College of Religious Studies of Al-Azhar University, Cairo.

This was many moons ago, but I still vividly remember how a group of us resolved to study in depth the sources of courses before the teachers had a chance to lecture to us. It was a time-honoured practice at Al-Azhar that the students come to their lessons fully equipped to challenge the thesis of the professor and even the adequacy of the sources he used.

This meant that we tried often successfully to consult all the possible references he was likely to go to. In our own youthful arrogance we thought this activity was an enjoyable sport. The old and experienced professors liked it and encouraged us. The younger lecturers thought it was nothing short of intellectual terrorism.

My task was to study the Old Testament as it is called in the Arabic Translation, I assumed that my task would be easy as I planned to use the Qur'an, which I had memorised in my childhood, as a guide. The Qur'an spoke of Moses, David, Solomon and about Noah, Abraham and many others whose careers I expected to find detailed in the Bible.

It was natural for me to presume that my excursion into the Jewish Bible would take in familiar territory. This however, was not so simple. In fact I felt like an emigrant returning after a long absence from his city consulting the road map he had taken with him when he left. The street names might still be as they were but the physical appearance had gone through fundamental changes.

To begin with the Genesis story in the Bible burdens the dumb snake with the sin of tempting gullible Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit while the Qur'an charges Satan with the crime. Not only that, the Qur'an absolves Eve from being the first to succumb to temptation. Both Adam and Eve were simultaneously enticed. Another detail that worried me was that the Biblical story seems to equate knowledge with sinfulness and presumably ignorance with innocence. The Qur'an story would not entertain such a concept.

After this hurdle I went through the narration of all the books and was struck by its simplicity. It reminded me of the old storyteller of my village, whom the TV had put out of business, in the way it related the story, leaving events to speak for themselves.

ONLY occasionally the Bible narrator passes a judgment on his character's conduct — a fundamental difference from the Qur'anic style. What was even more difficult was the presentation of sacred personages such as David and Solomon as mere Kings whose personal conduct was not always above suspicion. This is an area which our exegesists always contest. David and Solomon are Qur'anic Prophet Kings whose career is full of piety and purity.

But the central character of the Bible was God. I met him in Genesis proclaiming the commandments and recognise there what the Qur'an always told us about Him. However, his character later changes and he turns violent, inflicting death and destruction not only on sinners but on even good people who appeared to be in the way of what He planned.

This transformation in the image of God reminded me of the development of the concept of God among certain groups in early Islam. They despaired of the state of their contemporaries. But they were unable to change it so resorted to a re-interpretation of texts which transformed the image of God the Merciful to a Vengeful God.

Perhaps the hardship of the wilderness was the reason for the development. The God of the Commandments remains the True God of the Jewish Bible.

Dr Zaki Badawi, principal of the Muslim College, concludes the series on the "dark side of the Bible."

Letter

J R Lynch writes: In his kind tribute to George Young (*obituary, January 16*) Brian Wilson erred slightly. George did not play for most of his career at the centre of Rangers defence and latterly at right-back. He was signed as a right-back and played for a good part of his career there, becoming Scotland's captain.

The Rangers and Scotland centre-half was Willie Woodburn, a terrific player, but with a temper fiercer than his talent. As George was falling victim to increasing bulk and being embarrassed more frequently by left-wingers, Willie fell victim to the red mist again. He punched another opponent and was suspended *sine die*. George then moved to centre-half. The change of position prolonged his career, many thought.

We Partick Thistle supporters thought our man, Jimmy Davidson, as good a centre-half as Willie had been and better than George. But George played for the more glamorous club.

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Albania's anarchy

No excuse for inaction

ALBANIA'S PLUNGE into chaos has become Europe's second great tragedy since the end of the cold war. And, unlike Bosnia, it has not been unexpected. The risk is not just to life and safety for its people, but to its neighbours in the southern Balkans. This time there is no excuse for shoulder-shrugging on the grounds that this is merely "Balkan behaviour." We know that neglect now only stores up worse trouble for the future. Yet how the European powers should intervene effectively, having acquiesced so long and so complacently in the misrule of President Berisha, presents an even greater dilemma than the case of Bosnia. That crisis at least involved some degree of aggression across national frontiers: this is wholly internal. Yet that does not diminish the need to tackle the problem as inventively as possible — and as urgently.

Yesterday, Albania's already grim reality became overlaid by stock images of crisis. Chinooks with whirring blades, evacuees crouching low, unidentified hostile fire, euphoria when safety was reached . . . this is the spurious stuff of Saigon, '75. While the evacuation of foreign nationals is important to those concerned, it is peripheral to the real issues and should not become a substitute for them. The other set of stock images concerns the nature of the "anarchy" spreading across Albania. The label is correct: the gun law (especially in the south) and the looting needs no exaggeration — it is as terrifying as it sounds. The spread of uncontrolled violence on Thursday to the capital of Tirana steps across a new boundary of lawlessness. But it may not be entirely random. There were mounting claims yesterday that at least some of the arming of civilians in Tirana had been organised by President Berisha and his loyalists. And his secret police appears to have staged some operations to destabilise and divide the opposition. Nor, even if anarchy does rule completely, should this become an alibi for turning European backs on the crisis. Yesterday, Western diplomats were said to be claiming that "this is Eastern Zaire, not Europe", and muttering about "the folly of getting involved in a chaotic Balkan country." It would be greater folly to stay uninvolved.

Mr Berisha has continued to be regarded with excessive indulgence until long past his personal point of no return. As late as Wednesday, the US State Department was romancing about "the positive political steps taken by President Berisha in the last few days". His new "coalition" government came far too late after days of stubborn negotiations while the south fell apart; his ruling party still insisted on controlling the Interior Ministry. The promise of parliamentary elections by June under Mr Berisha now appears complete fantasy. Yesterday, the EU said it was working with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to hammer out a co-ordinated and urgent response to the crisis. Europe does still have considerable economic leverage and must be ready to reward with maximum speed and emphasis a return to peaceful conduct. What is needed urgently is Mr Berisha's immediate resignation, a new acting administration, and the promise of immediate elections.

A culpable slip

He should be sacked — or voted out

THOUGH everyone knew the issue had been gravely mishandled, the defence minister Nicholas Soames did not resign — nor was he sacked — when the true picture emerged of the poisoning of servicemen by organo-phosphates during the Gulf War. The blame was attributed to his subordinates. They too were not sacked, and did not resign. Though everyone knows that the issue has been gravely mishandled, the agriculture minister Douglas Hogg did not resign — nor was he sacked — over infected meat. Again, the true culpability is attributed to others.

There are no such complications in the case of David Maclean, the Home Office minister the terms of whose letter to a constituent about the treatment of Roisin McAliskey we disclosed yesterday. It was all his own work. Asked to justify the prisoner's treatment, the minister wrote: "When the day comes that the evil scum of the IRA are no longer murdering the innocent, and our children are no longer tortured by the Hindleys of this world, then I am certain that when I no longer need all my compassion for the innocent, I shall be able to spare some for the perpetrators."

Yesterday, his senior colleagues from the Prime Minister downwards did their best to divert attention from the real core of Mr Maclean's offence. He had never, said the Home Secretary, equated Roisin McAliskey with Myra Hindley, as claimed in the BBC's coverage. Maybe: but he did gratuitously raise the spectre of Myra Hindley in a context that had nothing to do with her. Mr Maclean was writing, the Prime Minister protests, as a constituency MP, not as a Home Office minister. True: but these are two aspects in any senior minister which cannot be wholly divorced. The crux of the issue is this. Was this letter the work of a man who recognised as he wrote, as everyone should and Home Office ministers should most of all, that Roisin McAliskey has not been convicted and ought to be regarded as innocent unless or until a court finds otherwise? The whole spirit of his letter, and particularly his repeated reference to Ms McAliskey as "the IRA prisoner", indicates that he did not. Either he did not know, or did not care, what he was doing. In either case he is culpable.

Sometimes, in their commendable zeal to catch and convict the guilty, even level-headed senior ministers get carried away. Once James Callaghan, while Home Secretary, commenting in the Commons on a man whom the police were seeking, interrupted his speech to announce that the culprit had been caught. That at least was a momentary lapse, a slip of the tongue, quickly corrected. But, in this case, Mr Maclean wrote, or dictated a letter, presumably read it through, and then had it despatched. What he did was done not inadvertently but knowingly.

In last year's summit reshuffle, it was reported, Mr Maclean turned down a Cabinet post because he preferred to stay where he was and pursue the war against crime. He will not resign, though he should, nor will he be sacked. But at least the electors on May 1 are likely to spare John Major the trouble of telling him he is no longer considered fit to sit in a Cabinet.

Letters to the Editor

The Greens' true colours

HUGO YOUNG'S commentary (Swampy & Co have a lesson for the Greens, March 13) reveals more about the media's current preoccupations with the "sexiness" of direct action than it does about his knowledge of the long-term strategy of the Green Party. While he accepts that the Greens are years ahead of the mainstream parties on many of the topical issues of the moment, he does not appear to realise that it is also way ahead of them, and of the media as well, on the power and efficacy of direct action and disobedience as well.

Our political strategy has always been a mixture of both electoral and direct-action campaigning and this is probably the one thing which has sustained us over the last 20 years. The fact that the media has chosen to ignore all this says more about them than it does about the stirling work of our officers and activists.
Phil Capon.
Campaigns Officer,
North-East Green Party.
30 William Street,
Chopwell,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE17 7JH.

HUGO Young correctly identifies the poor state of green politics in Britain. However, I disagree with his view that voting on green issues is a wasted gesture.

Politicians are unlikely to adopt green issues unless we force them to. Voters must make it clear that environmental concerns will be a factor in deciding who to vote for, *and individuals should quiz* their candidates on their respective views. Yet the environment is still not recognised as a political issue, in the way that education or employment are. People look to Labour to protect the NHS but to Greenpeace to save the planet.

The weakness of the Green Party must be contrasted with the strength of the rest of the environmental movement. *When one in 10 of the British* public are members of green groups but only one in 150 are in the Labour Party, why have we failed to translate this strength into political action?
John Watson.
Socialist Environment and Resources Association,
11 Goodwin Street,
London N4 3HQ.

HUGO Young has missed the point. *It would be fatal* for all greens, either to become clones of Swampy or join Friends of the Earth. The strength of the green movement lies in its diversity. You need people also to play the straight political game.
John Marjoram.
8 Castle Street,
Stroud GL5 2HP.

HAVING been active in the Green Party for some years at local level and attended party conferences, I eventually left, having witnessed how inimical is the electoral process to green values.

There was pressure to move closer to the conventional in order to attract voters. Thus it became necessary to re-organise the Green Party in a more top-down way, secure identifiable leaders and a new executive body, which could put motions at the top of conference agenda.

Such organisational changes amounted to a change in the values promoted. Values such as the dispersal of economic power to ecological regions were toned down to a programme of legislated environmentalism. Those who resisted this were seen as troublemakers.

It will only be more so if the Greens get PR and the heady whiff of electoral success.
Mark Kinzley.
7 Gaysham Avenue,
Gants Hill,
Essex IG2 6TH.

The Globe: experts take a dig

CHARLES Nevin's article (To dig or not to dig, March 12) contains some serious errors about current archaeological policy. The supporters of an excavation of the Globe theatre are surely not advocating such draconian measures as to demolish the Grade II listed Anchor Terrace — which is built over the major part of the theatre remains — and disrupt Southwark Bridge Road. It is also doubtful whether keyhole excavation in the basement of Anchor Terrace is appropriate.

When the site is investigated, it should be done well and on an appropriate scale and the opportunity to do that in the future is not compromised by the current proposals. These safeguard the remains of the Globe theatre.

There is a constant balance to be struck between the need to explore sites by excavation in order to advance our knowledge, and the need to conserve them for better future knowledge. The Rose theatre, the other major Shakespearean theatre on the South Bank, has been substantially excavated and backfilled. The Rose Theatre Trust has been putting together proposals to fully excavate the site and display the remains. It is surely for the best that one theatre at least should be preserved for a time in the future when its proper investigation can be assured.
(Dr) Geoffrey Wainwright.
Chief Archaeologist,
English Heritage.
23 Savile Row,
London W1X 1AB.

YOUR Leader (March 13) paints a misleading picture. The development proposals at Anchor Terrace do not involve any disturbance of the Globe's remains; they do however provide an opportunity to replace the temporary covering of the exposed material, and it is simply in respect of that work that scheduled monument consent was applied for and granted last year. We have not squandered the chance to open up the site.

The private owners have not put forward any development proposals which would disturb the remains, so it would not have been open to us, even if we had wished, to attach conditions to the statutory consent requiring further excavation of the site.

The approach adopted for the safeguarding of the Globe by the Government and English Heritage is sensitive to the remains' best long-term interests and is, I believe, the only responsible course. Philistinism it is not.
Lord Inglewood.
Department of National Heritage,
2-4 Cockspur Street,
London SW1Y 5DH.

I WORKED as an archaeologist on the original (1989) excavations of the Globe theatre. But we must be realistic here.

It has always been the case that business has overtaken archaeology in importance. The Globe is no exception, and as with the Rose theatre, we should be pessimistic about the future of the site. This pessimism is part of a general malaise about the cultural life of Britain.

If the Rose, a site that was almost completely exposed during excavation, can be so easily submerged beneath an unnecessary office block, then it is not surprising that the rather less complete remains of the Globe will follow suit.

Creeping privatisation seems to have eroded the divisions between archaeologists and developers; it is sometimes difficult to discern exactly who are the gamekeepers and who are the poachers. Perhaps we need a return to a system of organised, local archaeology units, independent of developers and accountable to local government, rather than to the mercenary interests of business.
Stewart Ellinson.
68 Lapage street,
Bradford BD3 8EH.

YOUR article exposes much that is wrong with British archaeology. The introduction of developer-funding and the preservation ethic eased the funding situation for rescue works but they allowed central government to reduce its financial commitment to archaeological fieldwork.

In addition, since the development of the preservation principle, it has become increasingly difficult for archaeologists to pursue research-based fieldwork in England. The lack of such excavation has diminished the opportunities for younger archaeologists to learn their craft in the field and for the general public — the real owners of heritage — to get involved in and *to learn about archaeology.*

Preservation in situ also demonstrates an abdication of responsibility toward archaeological remains and to the public. By saying that we should wait and see what the future holds we are denying ourselves the chance to answer current questions and test new theories. Imagine if the parents of modern British archaeology had done that.
Martin Brown.
31 De Montfort Road,
Lewes,
E Sussex BN7 1SP.

Abortion and that guilty feeling

DECCA Aitkenhead's approach to abortion (*A carefree abortion can be* embarrassing, March 14) provides a refreshing and accurate alternative to the usual description of the experience. My own research backs up her view that most women feel "little trauma and later regret". The single most significant reaction is relief.

This is because most terminations are carried out early in pregnancy on women in *their twenties who, like Decca,* are accidentally pregnant and don't want a child. Negative psychological indications are rare (most studies suggest 2-6 per cent of women find abortion in some way distressing) but this is due to the circumstances — for example, where the termination is of a wanted pregnancy, but foetal abnormality has been *detected.*
Ellie Lee.
Women's Studies Centre,
Kent University,
24 St Martin's Road,
Canterbury CT1 1QW.

LIKE Decca Aitkenhead, I found myself pregnant at university — and I was 19. Unlike her, I had my son, who was adopted at six days old. I then went back to university, gaining a 2:1 honours degree. I cannot see how doing this was "unthinkable" — unless there is something very wrong with the organ Ms Aitkenhead uses to think or feel with.
Alison Hull.
Middle Road,
Kingswood,
Bristol BS15.

DECCA Aitkenhead is right when she says those of us who've had abortions without the mandatory trauma and depression feel "guilty and anxious about their 'unnatural' absence of guilt". Of course I regretted having to have an abortion but it stung when I found out that the doctor who had examined me considered not agreeing to the surgery because I hadn't seemed "upset enough". I am not a cynical abuser of my fertility; I just desperately didn't want to have a baby at the age of 16.

If you continually tell somebody that the likely consequence of an abortion is psychological damage, then invariably they will display this sort of behaviour in a subconscious effort to appear "normal". I have found this confusion exists after a bereavement — that feelings have been so stereotyped and informed in advance that true instinctive responses are clouded.

If the language of horror was removed from the debate about abortion, then progress could be made on how to avoid the necessity for it, such as better health and sex education and a more informed and open approach to sex in general.

I know at least two women who are currently struggling with single-parenting at a young age who "chose" not to have an abortion due to such pressures. I am only glad I am not one of them.
B Mason.
Brixton Road,
London SW9.

It wasn't me, sir

I HAVE been accused of many things in the press over the past 12 months but impersonating female junior ministers was, until now, not one of them (Letters, March 14). I did, indeed, share a platform with Mrs Shephard at a press conference at the Department for Education and Employment on Monday to present Ofsted's report on Calderdale LEA. When she appeared at a press conference with Dr Brian Mawhinney the following day to talk abut league tables, I was visiting schools in Derbyshire and Greater Manchester. The third person on the platform was, I understand, Mrs Cheryl Gillan, a member of Mrs Shephard's ministerial team.

I can only surmise that your correspondent, Mr Davis, fell asleep in front of his TV screen while watching the lunchtime news on Monday, woke up 24 hours later and failed to notice that the subject, venue and personnel had all changed.
Chris Woodhead.
Chief Inspector of Schools,
Ofsted,
Alexandra House,
33 Kingsway,
London WC2B 6SE.

HMP mutiny

YOU are wrong in suggesting that the Resolution will be the first British prison ship "since the reign of Victoria" (Return of the prison hulk, March 12). Between May and October 1987, the Home Office used a hastily-converted car-ferry to incarcerate some 100 asylum-seekers. This ill-judged experiment ended in ignominy when, during the storm of October 16, 1987, the ferry broke free of its moorings and began to sink — with the petrified detainees on board.
Richard Dunstan.
Refugee Officer,
Amnesty International,
99-119 Rosebery Avenue,
London EC1R 4RE.

HOW short are British memories on Ireland. One needs to go back only 25 years to recall the Maidstone prison ship described by Gerry Adams in his autobiography: "The boat sat in its own sewage." Also mentioned is the Al Rawdah prison ship on which his uncle was interned in 1940.
Conrad Smith.
41 Ventnor Gardens,
Whitley Bay,
Tyne and Wear NE26 1QD.

MAYBE the Resolution could become the royal yacht after its stint as a prison ship. It should have plenty of reception rooms.
H F Wormald.
6 Cherry Avenue,
Slough SL3 7BT.

A Swift glance at past efforts

IT may interest Graham Swift's critics (The last word on Last Orders, March 15) to know that André Bleikasten, in his study of William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, notes that the novel shares unmistakeable likenesses with the following texts: T S Eliot's The Wasteland; N Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Sir James Fraser's Golden Bough. He also claims that it draws on the formal and thematic designs of James Joyce and Ferimore Cooper, not to mention numerous myths and folklore.

If writers were imitating each other in 1930, why the outrage in 1997?
S Lowe.
18 Horley Road,
Bristol BS2 9TJ.

HAS anyone else noticed the similarities between Michael Ondaatje's The English Patient and the 1934 novel, Meteor, by the great Czech writer, Korel Capek?

Both begin with a description of a windswept garden, both have a badly-burned pilot as a central character and focus on the attempts of three characters — two men and a female nurse — to unravel the pilot's past.
G Hudson.
24 Wood Terrace, Jarrow,
Tyne and Wear NE32 5LU.

THE whole of classical literature, in some way, is a copy, which does not make it any the less original, for "we all furnish a word to the poem". It does not matter what this poem is, what matters is that we have contributed a new meaning to it.
Tristan Moss.
17 Clifton Dale, York YO3 6LJ.

I HAVE been trying without success to get my novels published for 17 years. With each rejection slip I've thought, well, I'm just not good enough yet. But now I realise I've been doing it wrong. Foolishly, I've always tried to do something new and original.

Thanks to Graham Swift, my next effort will be stuffed full of "echoes" and "ghostly presences". I've already got a title: The Borrowers. Booker Prize, here I come!
Jonathan Herbert.
The Cottage,
Church Farm House,
Spring Close Lane,
Cheam, Surrey SM3 8PU.

WHAT about a new Booker Prize for the most original unpublished novel of the year, accompanied by quotes from the publisher/agent explaining their rejection?

To screen out the hopeless, an initial submission of a shorter extract could be required, together with a fee if a reading of the whole MS was then felt to be justified.
Leslie Caplan.
49 Howitt Road,
London NW3 4LU.

Please include a full postal address, *even on e-mailed letters*, and a daytime telephone number: we do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used

A Country Diary

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE: A peacock butterfly rests in the sun, wings spread out. Two lesser tortoiseshells drift over to feed on heathers. Furious winter rages are gone, for today at least. It seems a good moment to go dipper searching. As a child, I was delighted by these birds because of their perkiness, apparent cheerfulness and their miraculous ability to walk on river beds under the water. The weight of the water bearing down on its back keeps the bird from popping up. The stream by the garden used to have dippers. The nearest river, Brynberian, has a mile-long stretch of suitable dipper terrain before it is swallowed up by the river Nevern. Each year in springtime, we go to see if dippers have bobbed back again. The walk by the water takes you through a deep valley with precipitous sides. One is covered with moss-drowned boulders, brambles and trees; the other has a narrow field strip with ponies enjoying sweet smelling hay. There are big stones and fallen trees in the water giving good perches for dippers before they go off in search of food. There are quick runs, and sandy inlets for paddling and pecking, but there are no dippers to be seen. At the confluence, there are clumps of daffodils and snowdrops, and lesser celandines shine like little suns. Early purple orchids have already put out their rosette of spotted leaves. To catch sight of a dipper, however, we had to turn to the Nevern. The first thing we saw from the bridge was a white spot standing on a stone. Binoculars picked up the distinctive warm chestnut-brown edge on its belly before the black colouring takes over. They stand surveying their stretch of river before the next food-patrol sets off down the stream. This one favoured us with a wondrous display of winking with its white eyelids. Under the bridge were all the signs of nest-building.
AUDREY INSCH

Shaken, not blurred: a pay-per-view to a kill

Mark Lawson

BEFORE establishing himself in the early 1950s as one of the brand-name thriller writers of the century, Ian Fleming worked in newspapers. He was foreign manager for the Kelmsley Group, owners of the Sunday Times. It's unlikely that it would have occurred to Fleming at that time to model one of James Bond's megalomaniac super foes on the proprietor of the Sunday Times but, 33 years after the author's death, the media world is much changed and it was revealed this week that the baddie in the next James Bond film, about to begin shooting, will be a global media tycoon. The plot reportedly involves the tycoon trying to start a third world war in order to boost the ratings for his satellite television station. Eon, the film's producers, insist that the character isn't based on anyone in particular. Oh, yeah? And I'm an Australian who changed his nationality to American.

Casting around for credible villains after the end of the cold war, Goldeneye, the last Bond movie, set 007 against a Zhirinovsky-style maverick Russian politician. So, following this week's announcement, it can now be concluded that, in the view of the Bond producers, Rupert Murdoch represents a bigger threat to global peace and security than Vladimir Zhirinovsky; that loose-cannon capitalists are now more frightening than loose-cannon communists. This is a fascinating analysis, though one which may not be widely discussed in British newspapers.

Anthony Burgess, in an affectionate essay on the Bond books, suggested that they were likely to end up as one of the great 20th century myths. Certainly, Fleming's novels and Cubby Broccoli's movies — which became less and less dependent on the books and now share only a few character names with them — have offered, through their choice of villains, an accurate thermometer of Western terrors in the second half of this century. On paper and on celluloid, Bond has had a nose for the neuroses of the times.

Bond first appeared in 1953 in Casino Royale, walking on to the page behind the opening sentence: "The scent and sweat and smoke of a casino are nauseating at three in the morning". This note of disgust in a glamorous location set the tone for Fleming's 14 Bond books, written in only 12 years before his early death in 1964, the result of a nicotine and alcohol intake similar to his hero's.

In one important sense, the Bond books were never geopolitically realistic. Fleming — an Eton-educated patriot and snob, though one who chose to live in Jamaica — had been highly distressed by the betrayals of Philby, Burgess and Maclean and drew on his own background in wartime Naval Intelligence to produce consoling fantasies of British integrity and international significance. In Fleming's books, the keen but naïve CIA are always looking to Her Majesty's Secret Service to sort things out for them. In reality, British politics was beginning its long awe-stricken obeisance to the White House.

In the matter of the baddies, though, Fleming better demonstrated the instincts of the journalist he had been. Le Chiffre, Bond's opponent in Casino Royale, is a French traitor who has become a Russian double-agent: a perfect collision of British prejudices between the second world war and the cold war. That book introduced Smersh, the Soviet state death machine. A male-factor in a Bond book is, however, most likely to have German blood. Even the eponymous oriental genius of Dr No (1958) is specified as "half-Chinese, half-German". Auric Goldfinger, unveiled the following year, was a kind of itinerant Hitler who targeted the US gold reserves. Bond's most regular nemesis, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, is also of German stock, although Fleming nicked his name from an English family of aristocrats and cricket commentators.

While often regarded as products of cold-war neuroses, Fleming's books are notable for their total acceptance of the balance-of-terror argument. Nuclear weapons are often the currency in which his evildoers deal but the threat comes not from their use by governments but from their theft by mad individuals who wish to destroy the world. Danger came only when mad people got hold of Washington's and Moscow's goods. Blofeld's organisation Spectre (Special Executive For Counter-Intelligence, Revenge and Extortion) is an apolitical agency for world domination.

The Bond films have enthusiastically extended this lone-nut theory of villain: visualising extravagant islands, mountains and undersea cities in which the mavericks will preside after they have destroyed the world. During the 1980s, when only the titles were coming from Fleming — Octopussy, A View To A Kill, The Living Daylights — the British secret service was usually saving the world from freelance arms or drug dealers.

The choice now of a media tycoon as a Bond bad guy — a movie in which the villain is based on the head of 20th Century Fox! — might be seen as another example of the trend for entertainment to turn in on itself. The current hero and heroine of British television comedy — Chris Morris and Mrs Merton — have their own medium as their only subject. John Cleese's film, Fierce Creatures, and Doug Lucie's play, The Shallow End, both have Australian media tycoons as their villains.

Perhaps this is inward looking. But the Bond producers have more excuse than most. Ian Fleming was a creature of the media world. He famously cuckolded the then Viscount Rothermere, owner of the Daily Mail. Fleming moved freely among the Rothermeres and the Beaverbrooks and, few newspaper proprietors being entirely sane, it may not be entirely coincidental that he went on to write about crackpots who wished to take over the world.

Ian Fleming was perhaps more of a Huxley or a Wells than has generally been appreciated. At the time he wrote, his megalomaniacs plotting to take over the globe, with politicians powerless to stop them, were airily dismissed by critics as "preposterous". But we can now see that, in his various villains, he uncannily anticipated the time of the oddball billionaire who is not a politician but more powerful than any government; a man of confused and opportunistic nationality; a capitalist scavenger able to hold governments to ransom. Ian Fleming foresaw Rupert Murdoch, although he would certainly not wish to blow up the world, because of its effect on revenue. He does things differently: from a pay-per-view to a kill.

Albania teeters on the brink of chaos

Commentary

Martin Woollacott

ALBANIA is not so much a failed state as a state which has never had a chance to succeed. It is now reverting to a condition of dislocation and separation not seen since the last days of the Ottoman empire, with regions, towns and even villages isolated from each other, with arms in the hands of vendetta-prone highlanders and urban youth alike, and with institutions like the bureaucracy, judiciary, educational system, army, and police close to collapse.

It must be rescued, and the evidence points strongly toward the need for a major international effort, combining civil affairs teams and technical assistance groups with police and some troops.

That is the last thing a Europe weary of its Bosnian responsibilities wants — but it is duty-bound to consider it as the most serious of possibilities. The reasons why are many and compelling. Albania has been a casualty of the Yugoslav wars of succession. Its needs have been neglected by Western governments so obsessed with former Yugoslavia that they pushed other considerations aside, as long as President Sali Berisha restrained, or appeared to restrain, the Albanians of Kosovo and Western Macedonia from violent moves that might have widened the conflict. Its hopes for investment have been disappointed by Western business that saw better pickings elsewhere in the East European world and which rated the country as a war zone, purely because of its proximity to Yugoslavia. Its vulnerabilities have been exploited by criminals, notably the Calabrian mafia, whose Adriatic operations a feeble Italy has done little to impede.

The almost complete failure of development in Albania led indirectly to the crisis. President Berisha, unable to deliver on his promises of a better standard of living, turned to dubious instruments. The pyramid schemes, in part money-laundering operations for the only money that was being made in Albania — criminal money — did, artificially and temporarily, boost living standards and help his party get what votes it did in the 1996 elections. Afterwards, the combination of resentment of the ruling party's blatant cheating in the vote and popular rage over the failure of the pyramid schemes, which Berisha then started to rein in, undermined him.

Albania must be rescued, too, because of the tragedy waiting in the wings to replace the darkening farce of Albanian politics. There will, experts believe, quite soon be no economy at all if the political situation is not repaired. Legitimate trade is at a standstill, what industry remains is idle, agriculture disrupted, roads cut and bridges destroyed. Civil servants, doctors and schoolteachers are not being paid. Looting has devastated already pathetically equipped clinics, schools, and government offices.

The destruction of the country's physical plant is matched by that of its political and social infrastructure. Albanian politics, before, during, and after communism, have depended on powerful figures with strong regional support, none of whom have ever succeeded in forging nation-wide coalitions. Political change has always brought purges of all the previous regime's supporters, sending northerners into prison and exile with one shift, southerners, many years later, with the next, each planting the seeds for a future bout of revenge. This was one reason why Berisha could not, or would not, widen the northern base of his regime to include more than token figures from elsewhere.

It is why he created a thuggish secret police to cow parts of the country where he had no support. It is is also why the rebellious southerners are so insistent on his resignation. This vendetta-like quality of national politics is a legacy that has to be repudiated. But how a government of national reconciliation, even without Berisha, is going to be strong enough to recreate the army and police, restore the administration, collect the weapons stolen in such huge quantities, encourage some economic activity and trade, and prepare for elections is hard to see, unless it gets massive help.

Finally, Albania must be rescued because of the dangers its instability brings for the outside world. In Greece, the far right is pushing for the establishment of a zone of influence in southern Albania, which they call northern Epirus. While the Greek government naturally resists this, a sphere of influence has, or will, come about almost naturally, as communities near the border lose their links in Albania while preserving those with Greece. The same is true of coastal towns, like Vlore, which are already to some degree dependencies of Italy.

ITALY, the predator which, under Mussolini, destroyed Albanian independence, and the Western country which has most influenced Albania during and after the communist period, also has most responsibility for Alabania's plight. It has a great deal to fear, as the preferred destination of the many thousands of refugees who will inevitably head out of a failed Albania.

Serbia, another predator in the past, fears the Kossovo Liberation Army, which Berisha allowed to train in Albania. The Serbians have already closed the border. Some dissident Kossovans see a plot to divide Albania between Serbia and Greece and resent the likely loss of their protector, Berisha. In a more general way, Albanians in both Kossovo and Western Macedonia must sense that the world's attention is, for the first time ever, on their people and its future. Their attempt to seize the opportunies this may seem to present could be dangerous, given Macedonia's fragility and Slobodan Milosevic's need for distractions. Then there is an Islamic factor, with a number of Muslim countries involved in mosque building, the training of mullahs and in trying to extend *their* influence. In a stable state, this mixture of influences would be tolerable. In an unstable one, it could lead to grave troubles, inside and outside the country.

That there is going to be an intervention of sorts in Albania is already obvious. Franz Vranitzky, head of the mission to Albania sent by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe OSCE, announced within hours of his arrival that order could only be re-established with outside help. There are two dangers as Europe, and America, react to this call. One is to allow any assistance to be captured by a particular political faction. President Berisha already sees that as his best chance of survival. The other is to make the assistance too minimal and piecemeal. The problems of Albania are so serious that they require a coherent effort over a lengthy period, with the weight of the main European powers behind it. Troops are far from the most vital element in such an effort, and there is no chance of their despatch in large numbers, but they should not be absolutely ruled out. The country needs civil affairs assistance in almost every area, from finances to bridge building, from constitution writing to disarming the secret police. We may not want to call it a mandate, but that is what it ought to be.

Paging our sages

Martin Kettle

BROWSING through a mainstream American bookshop today, one is immediately struck by a vein of self-conscious civic seriousness which is almost entirely absent from the equivalent shop in this country. Here, there will be very few books about what used to be called the condition of England question, and even fewer lively ones. There, on the other hand, the shelves are stuffed with books about the condition — social, economic, political and cultural — of America, many of them worth reading and most selling well.

In England, and Ireland, though not so much in Wales, things are a bit like that too. Similarly in France and in Italy. In all these places, civil society is conducting a bushy-tailed conversation with itself. In England, on the other hand, the shelves are nearly bare and the conversation is somewhere between saggy and non-existent. With the important exception of the relationship with Europe, you will find few books about the state we're in — except of course The State We're In.

Will Hutton's bestseller continues, two years after publication, to sell more strongly than any other book about the condition of England. But what is striking about Hutton's book, apart from the public appetite revealed by its success, is that it had no real ancestors and begat no real descendants. In relation to the continuing culture of 1990s England, it remains a great one-off effort.

What is even more extraordinary is that the approach of the General Election seems to have made no difference to this typically English inertia either. Apart from a handful of biographies of Blair and his lieutenants, and a scattering of narrowly-focused books by Labour MPs, the imminent arrival of the Blair revolution is neither cause nor effect of any wider wave of writing and publishing. The books which make a visit to an American bookshop an essentially optimistic experience these days — the books about the end of the liberal economic ascendancy, the reinvention of government, the end of the conservative era and the rebirth of progressivism — have no cousins here at all.

Why is this apparently pivotal moment in modern Britain — the collapse of the Conservative ascendancy — almost entirely unheralded by a volley of challenging ideas or unmarked by a battery of imaginative analyses of what might be put in its place?

The tempting answer is to say, oh well, it's always been that way. The Brits, we well know, have always been pragmatists. We don't delude ourselves by imagining that history has great turning points. We avoid rhetoric and intellectual narcissism. We prefer to observe our own history rather than to interpret it. We are not driven by ideas.

The other flip response is to say that New Labour doesn't get anyone going because it has nothing very radical to say. Not only is that not as true as those who say it would like to believe, but it's not really the point either. The point is that things here need to change and are already changing. This isn't just Blair's moment; it ought to be ours as well.

With a few honourable exceptions, most of the work of explaining our times to ourselves has fallen to researchers in voluntary organisations and think-tanks, to full-time political activists and, above all, to journalists. The few books on our shelves, including Hutton's, reflect this. It doesn't make them bad books, but they tend to be the work of people whose preoccupations are often very short-term or very long-term. And they are not very numerous.

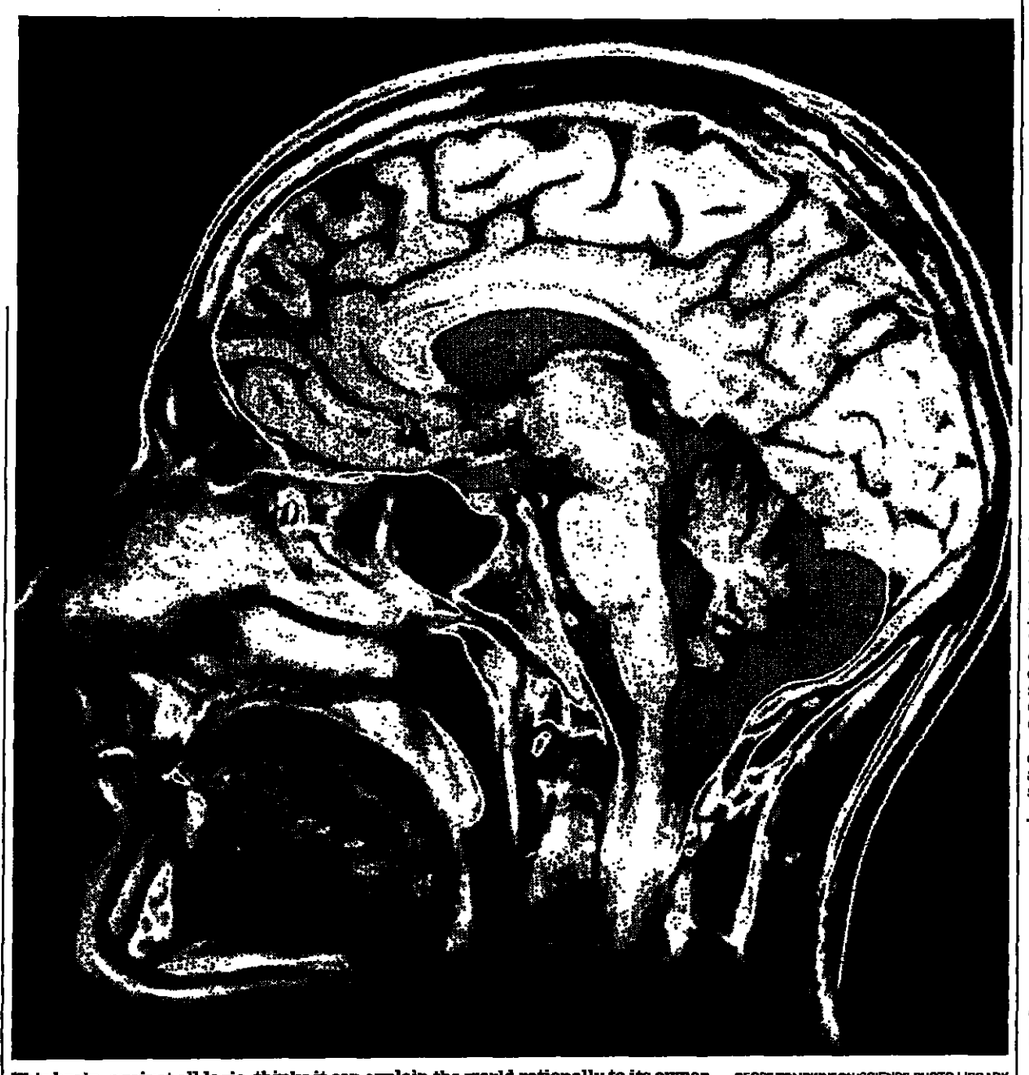
Britain in the 1990s ought by now to be reaping a bigger harvest from the intellectual investment sowed by our forebears in the 1960s. In their thousands, the baby-boom beneficiaries of the post-Robbins expansion of higher education poured into social studies, economics and history courses all over the country and, in spite of a few worrying moments, their successors have gone on doing so ever since. But what understanding of our national condition have they produced as a result? Where's the reward — in analysis, advice and prescriptions — for the rest of the country?

As any right-wing propagandist will tell you, the 1960s produced a generation and more of left-wing intellectuals, many of whom managed to persuade themselves that they were on the frontline of every sort of struggle. But where is their wisdom now that it is really needed? What have they got to say to the rest of us at what has surely to be seen as a moment of opportunity? Have they become so entangled in the obscure minutiae of academic dispute that they have lost both the will and the ability to say anything useful to the rest of us?

I am not saying that everything that these academics do should be directed towards some public purpose. I would be the last to deny that research and teaching must in part remain their own justification. But they are not the whole purpose of academic life either. You would have thought that our social scientists would have become an influential chorus in telling the story of our times and in writing the progressive agenda for the future. Yet, considering the money and time invested in them over the past 30 years, it is remarkable how little there is to show for it. As we scan the shelves, the rest of us have a right to feel let down.

Mind over matter of fact

Why do we have a great belief in the unbelievable? And why does illness bring our illogicality to new peaks? Because, says **Lewis Wolpert**, we cannot bear not knowing what is wrong and need to tell ourselves stories to make sense of our lives



This brain, against all logic, thinks it can explain the world rationally to its owner GEOFF TOMPKINSON/SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

I HAVE always found it a puzzle why people believe in things for which there is no real evidence. Such beliefs are universal — cultural anthropologists have yet to find a single society that does not have a longstanding and well-developed system of paranormal beliefs.

And our society is much the same if one includes religion, astrology, psychoanalysis, and many alternative medical treatments. We do not adhere to David Hume's principle that "no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish".

Just the opposite, such beliefs are our natural way of thinking and may be part of our genetic make-up because they are adaptive. We have a fundamental need to tell ourselves stories that make sense of our lives. We hate uncertainty, and for major life events find it intolerable.

Science also involves a belief in the unbelievable, like the Big Bang for the origin of the universe or DNA as the basis of our heredity. But the situation is quite different, for with a great deal of study anyone could understand the evidence. It is an illusion to think that scientific rationality is part of our make-up. Indeed, scientific thinking requires an approach and internal consistency that does not fit comfortably with common sense — that is, our natural expectations.

Moreover the world is not built on common-sense principles; if an idea fits with common sense, scientifically it is bound to be false. Much of our belief in science thus comes from authority rather than understanding. It is far from easy to explain the basis for our belief that it is the Earth that goes round the Sun, and not the other way round.

Our drive to believe is nicely illustrated by illness. There is a relatively small range of theories about illness over a wide range of cultures. Almost all interpret illness as injury done by some other agency, often in human form, and hence posit that some form of aggression has taken place: illness is not accidental.

A study of 189 different cultures to determine how they explained illness found that just four of them conformed to a Western model and so believed in infectious agents like bacteria. In 185 of them it was bad blood, witchcraft, guilt, and supernatural forces; the causes include punishment for violating sexual and religious and other norms. But given the initial premise that harm can be caused by thoughts of envy, greed and malice, then the rest of the beliefs follow quite naturally.

We are not that different. Patients in the West went to doctors for at least 2,000 years even though physicians could do virtually nothing for their patients. It is only within the last 100 years, with the discovery of, for example, insulin and penicillin, that medicine began to effect cures.

For all the previous period, patients allowed doctors to bleed them almost to death, without the slightest evidence that it would do them any good. The very first clinical trials on bloodletting, conducted in Paris in the middle of the last century, showed how ineffectual and damaging it was. The history of the agencies thought to be responsible for mental disease has been described as a kind of miniature history of the Western medical tradition: from the gods, to the humours, to social misfortune, to the three little psychoanalytic homunculi — id, ego and superego — and more recently to genes. We can see the origins of such beliefs in children. At an early age, children think about the causes of illness like colds as coming from the Sun or even as a punishment for being naughty. People go to doctors because they want an explanation as well as a cure. We cannot bear not knowing what is wrong with us even if there is nothing that can be done. But going is in itself a road to being better, for it is part of the powerful placebo effect.

Psychologists have suggested that why faith-healing and related practices work is that they require the patient to make an investment in effort, time and money. Because we need to justify our behaviour and because we believe we are rational, we feel guilty if the treatment does not work — so we usually ensure that it does.

THE DRIVE to find an explanation for events like illness that affect our lives is very strong. A recent example is provided by the bereaved families of the TWA airline cash. They are absolutely determined to know why the crash happened. We need to tell ourselves stories to make sense of our lives. It is dramatically illustrated by brain damage that results in confabulation.

Confabulation is due to damage of the frontal lobe of the brain and results in a distortion of memory. For example, a patient in hospital claims that he is in fact at work and the people in the ward work for him. When the doctor points out that they are all in bed, he replies by explaining that he likes to keep his employees comfortable. Such patients have lost that system that tests reality more reliably but illustrates our drive to make sense even if it is nonsense.

The importance of our biological heritage is the driving force in the new evolutionary psychology. There are contrasting modes of thinking about human beings and culture.

In the standard social-science model, all beliefs are culturally determined; by contrast, in the integrated causal model of evolutionary psychologists, biology and psychology are central. The key assumption is that the human mind consists of a set of evolved information-processing mechanisms which are adaptations produced by natural selection. We are born with brains that are programmed to do complex things like learn a language, to have sexual drives and basic emotions like the fear of heights.

It is astonishing but true that the newborn can both recognise human faces and count. We also have evolved a propensity to categorise the world into the animate and the inanimate. Could it be that some of our our beliefs are also strongly influenced by our biology?

Uncertainty is unacceptable, and religion provides a major source of explanations. Religion is the commitment to culturally postulated super-human beings or superhuman objects, and we may be able to understand the basis of such beliefs by thinking of the very early evolution of the human mind 1,000 or more years ago when consciousness developed. A central feature of consciousness is the drive to make explanations, assigning causes to the events that matter to us.

Such a mode of thought — making connections — was essential for toolmaking, another fundamental human characteristic. Life was very tough. A lot of children died at a young age and natural disasters were everywhere. As they had no explanation for such distressing events, they began to construct, as it were, false knowledge.

It was fear that produced gods in the world. For the basis of their explanations was that some sort of human-like agent was responsible. The only causal agent they were sure existed was human action. So what could be more natural than to assign the causes of inexplicable events to a human-like agency? This gave our ancestors two adaptive advantages: uncertainity, and thus anxiety, was removed, and there was an animate agent that might be appeased in some way. Might it not be that those with this disposition of thought survived better than those who did not have such beliefs, and that it thus became genetically determined? But it is also clear that religion can play a major role in promoting social cohesion.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, the anthropologist, put the key idea very clearly when he stated that "no essential difference has been established between primitive mentality and our own. There is a mystical mentality more marked among primitive societies than our own, but present in every human mind. A sense of an invisible power and a reality other than than our normal reality..." One should not be surprised that the mystical representations reported by anthropologists are similar to the thoughts of children as described by Piaget.

Another anthropologist, Pascal Boyer, postulates a dynamic programme that operates in different civilisations and epochs, from so-called primitives to high culture, a programme dealing with the causality of evil. It appeals to unseen powers and it tends to establish and to reiterate religious rituals in order to restore the previous situation of normalcy.

The most common of religious representations postulate classes of beings whose specific properties make them very strange, but people can take singular episodes and ritual statements as the basis for hypotheses about ghosts in general, because they readily understand ghost behaviour in psychological terms. It would be difficult to acquire and represent such ideas about such non-physical beings except against a background of intuitive theories about ghosts and witches. There are cognitive constraints which constrain the learning of religious ideas, and Boyer's hypothesis is that even if there was a completely random variation in religious representations, with every generation starting from scratch, certain types of representation would be favoured.

Similar views having been expressed by the historian Robin Briggs in relation to his study of witchcraft in the 17th century. Very few people are content to accept that blind chance plays a large part in their lives; they seek reasons and logical connections even when these do not really exist. The human mind, far from being infinitely malleable, tends to impose certain inbuilt patterns on experience. The presence of strikingly similar witchcraft beliefs in most known societies raises the relationship between witchcraft and human universals. Are, Briggs asks, human beings born with a specific inherited mechanism for detecting witches? Witchcraft thinking provided intuitively attractive ways for evading logic.

Thoughts about the unbelievable may be both natural and adaptive and also genetically determined. There is some evidence that people with religious beliefs are more healthy and do better under adverse conditions. If this is true, then one has perhaps to be cautious about dispelling such beliefs.

Placebos can be very effective, and religion may be not the opium of the people, but the great placebo. It also seems that we are all capable of an enormous amount of self-deception; I do not exclude myself.

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THIS WEEK'S essayist, Lewis Wolpert, is Professor of Biology as Applied to Medicine at University College London. He was trained as a civil engineer in South Africa but changed careers and now studies the development of embryos. His most recent book is The Unnatural Nature of Science (Faber). Passionate Minds (with Alison Richards), interviews with scientists, will be published by OUP later this year

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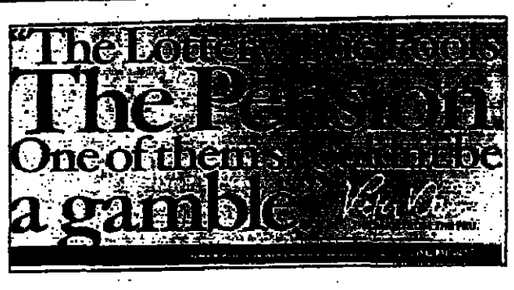
Insurance strategies to woo the wary

Boxing clever, the real Man from the Pru

Report by Simon Beavis and Lisa Buckingham

From hard slog to hard sell: Fred Sawyer on the road, circa 1949, small screen star Sir Peter, above, and right, the advertisement that made victims of pension miss-selling remember how they took a gamble with Prudence and lost



Prudential chief Sir Peter Davis has become a figurehead in the latest advertising campaign, left – while pensions mis-selling is fresh in the public mind. Some in the insurance world applaud his move, others fear it could bring down a terrible retribution.

FEW chief executives would relish the chance to stand up and promote their company on the box. Most prefer to do their public relations in a box at the Royal Opera. Sir Peter Davis does both.

As a trustee of the Royal Opera the second is easy. The first is not — particularly in a week when his company is first in the firing line for failing to compensate a misguided public in the pensions mis-selling scandal.

Yet he has become the talk of the advertising industry and the City by daring to try to combine the two.

On TV he is The Man from the Pru in a series of plush, soft focus ads. On hoardings he is playing the same role, neatly autographing huge bill posters.

In the City he must cultivate a comfortable if rather stuffy image as the boss of Britain's biggest insurer and the largest single owner of shares in the country with £85 billion under its wing.

The conservative world of insurance doesn't like its top players to look too snazzy or they begin to ask whether the business isn't a bit fly. Sir Peter's task is more difficult because he took over from Mick Newmarch, who was widely regarded as "having got too big for his boots" after assuring the world his company was whiter than white.

That complacency looked endemic this week after a Commons select committee castigated the pensions providers and their regulator, the PIA, for failing to compensate victims of mis-selling. Sir Peter's decision to put his head above the parapet risks a gargantuan backlash, not only against the Pru, but the entire industry.

To choose to cosy up to consumers in the midst of this crisis and with the government threatening to force the rest of us to buy insurance to cover holes in state provision looks either arrogant or condescending.

Indeed, eyebrows are being raised about the wisdom of his decision to turn small screen star and become the personification of the Pru.

"It is an extraordinarily high-risk strategy," commented one banker yesterday. Another was more blunt when he said the campaign, rightly or wrongly, smacked of "incipient megalomania".

The danger inherent in putting a face to a corporate image is the risk the company could be tarnished by personal problems. One senior insurance executive commented: "I'd be staggered if it were the case, but this whole thing could backfire if he were found to have skeletons in the closet."

But Sir Peter is no stranger to risk taking. There can have been few more daring moves than forging the multi-billion pound merger between Reed International and Elsevier of Holland — a deal whose pricing depended on the relationship between the pound and the Dutch guilder — on the day Norman Lamont pulled Britain out of the ERM.

HE IS, however, expecting the Pru to keep unconventional company with his latest tactics.

Only a few British business leaders have managed to turn a high public profile to their advantage. Richard Branson, the arch self-publicist, does it on an almost daily basis. Anita Roddick is only a little less ubiquitous, though a great deal more earnest. Even Bernard Matthews has proved that, where turkeys are concerned, there is nothing like a bit of raw Norfolk burr to get sales of extruded meat moving.

But in each case these are people who founded their companies and can rightly claim to be the face of the business. And their companies are comparative tiddlers, a mere sandwich in the Pru's lunchbox. Even in publicity-hungry America, where people seem ready to undergo almost any humiliation for TV exposure, few top executives have risked becoming a figurehead. Those who have disported themselves in front of the TV cameras have warned of the dangers.

Take Lee Iacocca, the man who claims to have dragged Chrysler out of crisis by becoming the public face of the carmaker. He chose a rhyme to encapsulate a basic law of marketing:

"When a client proves
refractory
Show a picture of his
factory.
If the boss still moans and
sighs,
make his logo twice the size.
But only in the direst cases
Ever show the clients' faces."

His autobiography, also contains this warning: "If the ad fails, it's *his* ass that is on the line. You can always blame it on the chairman's enormous ego. After all, the public routinely assumes that it was his idea — even when it wasn't."

The Pru's campaign wasn't Sir Peter's idea: it came from ad agency Abbot Mead Vickers, in particular David Abbott who has worked with Sir Peter regularly over the last 16 years. "I suppose he was reassured I was doing it and that I wouldn't expose him to too much ridicule or too many jokes from his colleagues," says Mr Abbott, adding: "If ego was involved, it was very well disguised."

After decades of trying to shake off the Man from the Pru image — that Victorian symbol of working class trust — the advertising agency realised that the Pru had a real brand identity in its history which could be exploited. At the nadir of the insurance industry's fortunes, nothing was needed more than a quiet symbol of "prudence".

Abbott looked for a way to reinvent the brand without dragging up the memories of the dusty insurance salesman wearing bicycle clips. He wanted something more middle class and affluent, hence the old man on a Harley Davison, the holidays in the sun and Sir Peter's smooth-talking voice-over.

With Virgin invading the financial services sector, Mr Abbott denies that it was a direct attempt to play Richard Branson at his own game. "The Pru has taken up the challenge, but not in response to Branson, more in response to a problem for all financial services companies which tend to be faceless, colourless institutions," says Mr Abbott.

It is not just about branding and one insurer trying to steal a march on the rest. An executive in the industry says it is a "very thoughtful part of a wider strategy to re-establish confidence in the insurance industry. If he can rebuild that confidence then everyone will benefit. . .confidence in insurance sellers is needed at a time when we are looking at long-term care."

The Pru of course has a direct problem of credibility. In the pensions mis-selling scandal it emerged as the worst offender — after its former chief executive had attempted to assure customers that it was above suspicion. Mr Newmarch stood up — in a slightly less polished way — and got shot down.

No wonder then that some now blench when they see the new hoardings which shout: "The lottery, the pools, the pension. One of them shouldn't be a gamble."

SOME 41,000 prudential pensioners sold duff private pensions could be forgiven for wondering which is supposed to be the safe bet. They might also see an irony in the fact that the self-proclaimed Man from the Pru shares a name with the man who regulates the lottery, the director general of Oflot.

There have been other blemishes. The company has been publicly carpeted and fined £75,000 by Imro, the City watchdog.

The tarnished record reflects the problems of the entire sector — now being handed more pensions and long term care business by the government. Ministers took the trouble to put out a special press release with the pensions proposals, arguing that another mis-sellings scandal was impossible. People in the industry — where salesman are poorly trained and unlikely to be independent when driven by commission — know better.

At Reed, Sir Peter was clearly an innovator and a key player. Close colleagues refer to him as sharp, a man of huge energy and ability. "He is one of those people who changes things. He is in the business of changing cultures," one City friend remembers.

Others within Reed complain that he was aloof, running the business from an ivory tower and surrounded by a close circle of trusted advisers. A few of those aides have moved with him from Sainsbury's to Reed to the Pru.

Charting a course to the top of British business is not for wilting flowers and Sir Peter — a big man at over 6ft — clearly does not lack self-assurance. But few describe him as arrogant or egocentric. "He is a very ambitious man, but among ambitious men he would not be in the premier league of egos," a close associate says. His downfall at Reed — where he tried to beat the collegiate Anglo-Dutch culture to emerge as top dog — shows that he believes in being in control. Out-politicked, he left the company — but not before securing a £2 million pay off.

His wide involvement with good causes — from Opportunity 2000, the campaign to promote women in business, to adult literacy and the national advisory committee on training targets — may reflect a desire for a high public profile. But, though some feel it would have been better if he concentrated on business, colleagues from those organisations speak of his dedication, a family background which imbued a spirit of public duty and the hard work he is prepared to put in for them. His other extra-mural activities reflect an interest in the arts. Apart from the Royal Opera, he is also a trustee of the V & A. His hobbies include sailing, reading and wine.

His reputation for strategic thinking rests largely on his time at Reed. At the Pru he has been busy implementing other people's well-laid plans such as banking and selling the reinsurance albatross M & G.

The question most watchers ask, though, is whether or not he risks overstepping the mark by becoming the Man from the Pru. The jury is out. But a long standing banking associate thinks Sir Peter's gamble is carefully calculated. "He has being taking risks for donkeys' years and most of them have paid off."

First shots in a long and bloody battle over jobs

David Gow

TOMORROW tens of thousands of angry and anguished Belgians will take to the streets of Brussels in a march for jobs. It is the culmination of protests over the sudden closure of Renault's nearby Vilvorde plant, with the loss of 3,150 jobs and possibly a further 1,500 in supplier firms.

But this *manif* is more than a reprise of the UK's 1980s demos, now sweeping across Europe. It is peculiarly Belgian, bringing together citizens worried by industrial decline, but also by the corrupt politicians, judges and senior police officers and their part in the evil plague of murderous paedophilia.

It is also part of a wider revolt against the economic price of monetary union. It favours a social Europe where the criterion of employment counts as much as that of budget deficit or state debt. A wave of protest that this week saw German miners virtually occupy the government area of Bonn and Belgian, French, Spanish and even Slovenian employees besiege Renault's HQ at Boulogne-Billancourt.

Renault's decision to axe Vilvorde and move part of its (profitable) production to Valladolid in Spain provoked more than heart-searching at the European Commission. With breathtaking insouciance, Renault sought to recoup a sixth of the required £250 million or so new investment at Valladolid as aid from the Spanish government. Madrid hastily withdrew its request for commission approval, but its competition directorate was spurred into tightening rules on state aid.

A team of senior commissioners are rushing forward plans to stop firms "shopping around" for aid, picking up government subsidies to open a plant and then shifting production to another country — with handouts from taxpayers. Car firms are especially in their sights.

> The protests are bringing together citizens worried by economic decline and corruption

Companies have such clout in inward investment that national governments engage in an unseemly — and opaque — lobbying to attract new plants with the aid of, well, bribes. Wales secured Europe's biggest direct investment, the £1.2 billion chip plant to be built by LG at Newport, via undisclosed amounts of taxpayers' money.

In America the handouts and tax-breaks paid by Alabama to attract Mercedes — and 1,500 new automotive jobs, with 15,000 in related industries — totalled $300 million (£180 million). The price paid by one of the poorest federal states was so high it unsuccessfully raided the education budget and then borrowed from its pension fund at a punitive 9 per cent, to meet the bill. South Carolina's $100 million to get BMW was a trifle in comparison.

Clearly, governments believe that the price is right because of the jobs. And the measures being contemplated by Brussels will be little more than a pin-prick given the power of ministers to shape the rules. But the commission's proposals could include seeking guarantees from firms that they would keep plants open for a minimum period, and setting time limits on aid applications.

Beyond that, commissioners will be seeking more radical measures when the six-year programme of structural funds — aid for less-developed regions — comes under review before its expiry in 1999.

That will need to take account of the likely entry of relatively poor, ex-communist states like Poland and Hungary. The outcome is certain to be that the current generosity of handouts to the biggest, richest countries — which get 80 per cent of structural funds — will be sharply curtailed.

The new millennium is bound to see pan-European marches for jobs on a scale that will dwarf tomorrow's demo in Europe's capital.

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TOMORROW

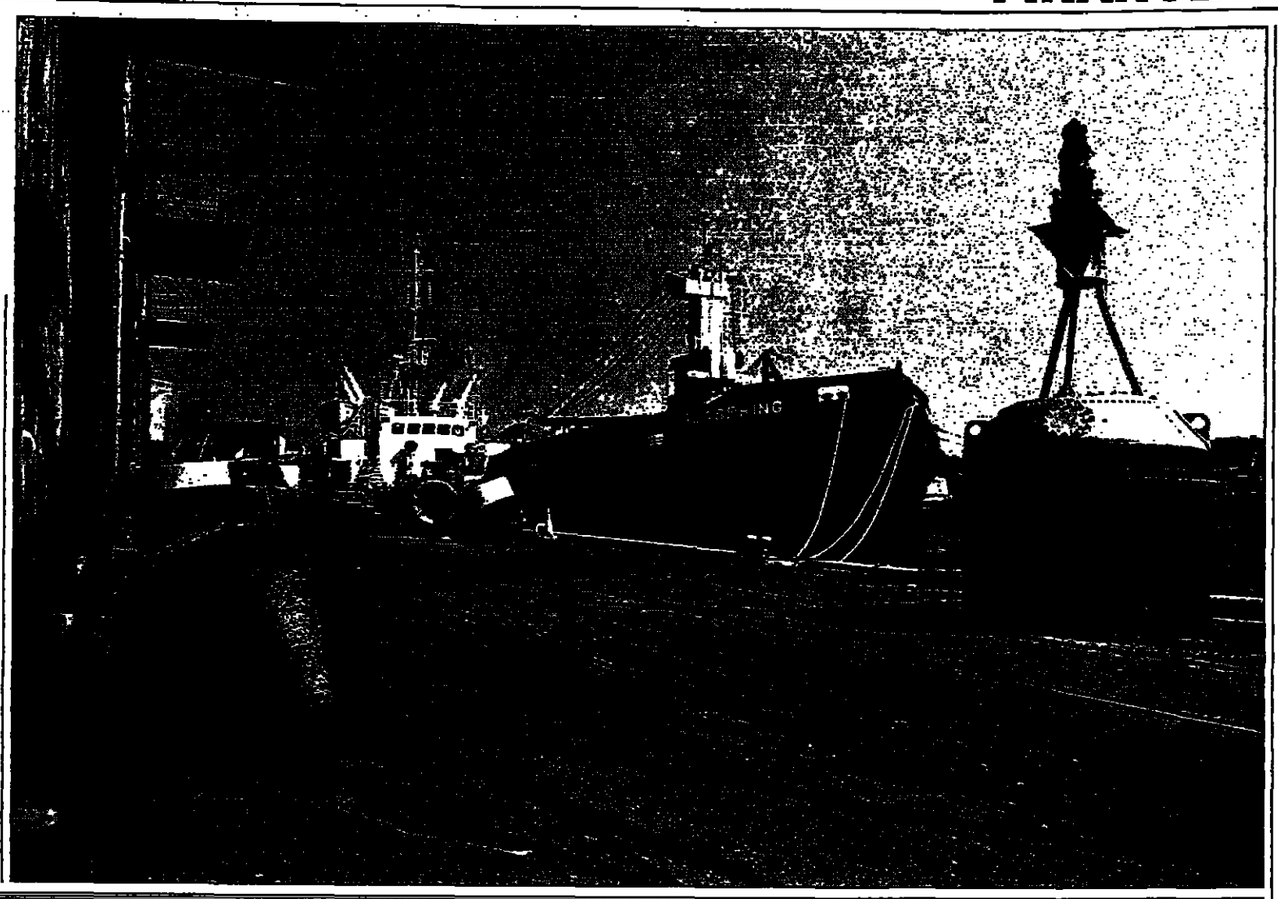
From Dunblane to the Daleks

Will Self's television column: week two

THE FIRST SUNDAY PAPER, AND THE MOST ORIGINAL

The Observer

Port to be sold for £24m



ASSOCIATED British Ports was yesterday named as the preferred bidder for the Port of Ipswich by the Department of Transport.

ABP, which owns and operates 22 ports around the country, has bid £24.4 million which, after deducting the sale levy of 50 per cent for the Government and privatisation costs, values the port, pictured right, at £12 million.

The group, whose businesses include the ports of King's Lynn, Lowestoft and Colchester, said Ipswich was well-placed to handle such agricultural commodities as grain, fertilisers and animal feed, as well as timber imports.

Sir Keith Stuart, chairman of ABP, said the company intended to invest in new facilities and services in an effort to attract new business to the port. Ipswich has 81 hectares of freehold land.

Completion of the sale is expected shortly.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALAN REEVELL

Labour-supporting tycoon wants satellite rival to pay levy ● £290m profit for United News & Media

Hollick demands tax on Sky

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

LORD HOLLICK, one of the most powerful ITV barons — and Tony Blair's close business adviser — yesterday called for the hugely profitable satellite TV group BSkyB to be forced to pay a broadcasting levy to the Government.

The chief executive of United News & Media — whose TV operations include Meridian and Anglia as well as stakes in HTV, ITN, Yorkshire-Tyne Tees and Channel 5 — said he supported spreading the tax net more widely. ITV companies pay about £400 million a year in government levies, but their annual cash bids — which range from a few thousand pounds to nearly £60 million — will be renegotiated within the next year alongside the Channel 4 subsidy.

Labour peer Lord Hollick said he did not expect the Treasury to want to accept any less than it receives now. At the same time, many ITV companies, such as Meridian, Yorkshire-Tyne Tees and Carlton, were expecting "quite significant relief" in terms of their contributions.

The boss of United, which reported a 12 per cent profits increase to £290.2 million in the first full year since the United/MAI merger, was speaking out for the first time on the issue of a tax levy on BSkyB.

Lord Hollick said: "I can see the force of the argument to bring BSkyB into the tax net; it is sensible to cast the revenue net widely."

But Lord Hollick, whose company is an investor in the nascent Channel 5, said he would not welcome any tax which stood in the way of the investment in new channels.

For up-and-running broadcasters making good profits "it would be sensible and fair that tax should be spread more widely".

He said he was sure Rupert Murdoch, whose News Corporation group is the largest shareholder in BSkyB, would be "only too happy to pay his share".

United yesterday declined to comment on its plans for Yorkshire-Tyne Tees following the announcement earlier this week by Granada, which has about a quarter of YTTV's shares and had been expected to mount an early takeover, that it would not bid unless a rival emerged.

Lord Hollick said he understood the reservations of Gerry Robinson, the Granada chairman, about valuing an ITV contractor before its licence fee had been renegotiated.

United has YTTV warrants which could take its stake to nearly 20 per cent, but Lord Hollick said this was only one of several options. Yorkshire held merger talks with Anglia television before that company was acquired by Lord Hollick's MAI group, later to merge with United.

Broadcasting, which produced a profits growth of 36 per cent for the group last year, was a top performer for United, whose national newspaper business, which includes the Express, was hampered by a £27 million increase in paper costs.

However, Lord Hollick said the national titles were profitable and "now making a fight of it in the middle market". Despite a 5 per cent drop in the group's money-broking business because of a lack of volatility in world money markets, shares in the group rose 31p to 771½p.

Following the acquisition of Blenheim — which increased investment spending to £750 million last year compared with the £300 million raised by disposals — United is now the world's biggest exhibitions organiser. The company's newly appointed chief operating officer, David Arculus, who joined from Emap, said he was convinced of the profitable synergies from the trade magazines and exhibitions.

Four quit at harassed NatWest

Tony May and Lisa Buckingham

NATWEST Markets, which is attempting to live down the worst ravages of a £90 million options scandal, was yesterday dealt another blow when four senior managers parted company from the bank.

Three of the executives are understood to have lost their jobs as part of NWM's shake-up of its debt markets business which is being merged into the recently acquired American operation, Greenwich Capital, which it bought for $590 million (£371 million) last year.

NatWest said last night the resignations had nothing to do with the interest rate options scandal where losses centred on the deals of Kyriacos Papouis who was supervised by five other executives, all of whom have now been suspended.

But the departures are a result of the shake-up of NatWest's global debt markets business which is being merged with Greenwich Capital, an integration process which is being accelerated because of the scandal.

In addition to the three managing directors — who NWM stressed were leaving amicably and who are understood to be receiving six-figure pay-offs — Roger Nagioff, head of European equity derivatives, also said he was quitting.

Mr Nagioff, who has been with the company since 1989, is thought to have been offered a senior post with rival Lehman Brothers.

The new debt markets operation will be headed by co-chief executives, Chip Kruger in London and Gary Holloway in the US. Four of the 10 debt market divisions will be run by dealers from the American operation while the other six will fall to NatWest staff.

Meanwhile, the Serious Fraud Office, which investigates and prosecutes substantial financial fraud, confirmed that it was keeping abreast of developments at NatWest.

A spokesman for the SFO said: "NatWest Group has been in touch with us concerning the review of NatWest Markets' interest rate options trading. We have not begun an investigation but we are monitoring the situation."

The SFO is also in touch with regulators from the Bank of England and the Securities and Futures Authority who are also investigating the losses. NatWest says it is not yet clear whether the losses resulted from personal gain.

Labour to make fuel price U-turn

Colin Weston and Chris Barrie

LABOUR has abandoned plans for radical reform of the rules governing privatised gas and electricity industries. It will instead endorse the price-control formula introduced by the Conservatives when the energy sector was privatised.

The "no change" policy is spelled out in a report to be published next Tuesday after months of deliberations. It is understood that the Labour leadership will support the report's recommendations.

The report is also expected to confirm that the timetable for the introduction of competition in the domestic electricity supply industry is unrealisable because the 12 regional electricity companies will not be ready for the 1998 deadline.

The report from the Commons trade and industry select committee — which is chaired by Labour MP Martin O'Neill — is also expected to avoid any mention of Labour's windfall tax on excess utility profits, the proposed source of revenue for the party's "welfare to work" strategy.

It is likely to recommend that the offices of the gas and electricity industry regulators be combined into one energy watchdog, but only after the nationwide introduction of competition in gas and electricity in 1998.

Endorsement of the price-control formula — known as RPI minus x — is understood to be one of the report's key recommendations.

The formula, under which the utilities must cut customers' bills in real terms, is seen as flexible enough to catch up with booming profits and the best of a series of poor range of options.

Labour has flirted with the idea of a price-control system under which consumers would receive a share of any profits made by a privatised utility above a level specified by industry regulators.

The select committee looked at how regulation has affected share price performance and how effective the operation of RPI minus x has been.

Its recommendations are based on evidence from utilities regulators and other bodies, including consumer groups.

MPs also visited the US to look at regulation in New York and New England.

Takeover Panel raps BZW's reticence over Northern fee

Lisa Buckingham

BZW, the investment banker, was criticised yesterday by the Takeover Panel for failing to reveal all the facts concerning a controversial £250,000 performance fee which was paid while it was helping Northern Electric fight a hostile takeover bid.

In a further black mark for the City's leading lights, the Takeover Panel said BZW ought to have gained clearance for the fee so there was no question that it acted as an inducement to buy shares and influence the outcome.

In the takeover battle against CE Electric of America last December, BZW spent £10.7 million buying 1.63 per cent of Northern's shares two days before the deadline. The Americans secured victory by 0.13 per cent.

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Canada 2.1180	Hong Kong 11.97	New Zealand 2.20	Sweden 12.02
Cyprus 0.7880	India 57.24	Norway 10.61	Switzerland 2.27
Denmark 10.14	Ireland 0.8830	Portugal 284.75	Turkey 194.250
Finland 7.95	Israel 5.36	Saudi Arabia 5.87	USA 1.5570

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Advertising chief poised for £3.2m share bonus

Tony May

MARTIN Sorrell, head of WPP, the world's biggest advertising group, will on Monday qualify for a £3.2 million share bonus — the next stage of an incentive scheme branded "greed on a truly heroic scale" by shareholders in 1995.

This will take Mr Sorrell's holding of bonus shares under the controversial scheme to £6.4 million and put him on target to achieve the maximum £25 million bonanza — the most lucrative pay-out in the history of corporate Britain.

The scheme requires the group's shares to reach four escalating share price targets and remain above each one for 60 consecutive days. The first target was achieved last September and on Monday night the second stage will be completed as the shares will have been above 230p for 60 days. The clock has already started running on the third stage as the shares passed 260p on March 7.

He is possibly 45 days away from collecting his next 1.17 million shares — unless the share price falls back through the trigger point, in which case the clock has to be restarted.

The company defends the scheme on the grounds that all shareholders and employees benefit from a rising share price. Critics say his success owes as much to the strongest bull market for shares in history as it does to his helmsmanship.

Airlines weigh in with poultry offer

Game of chicken played out over the Pacific, says DAN ATKINSON

FORGET the useless "services" pressed on business travellers by airlines in Europe and North America. Leave behind the "express baggage check-through" and Richard Branson's offer to fax your measurements from 30,000ft to a Hong Kong tailor (suit ready on touchdown).

Instead, hula-hula to Western Samoa and collect a bucket of finger-licking fried chicken — yours absolutely free when you island-hop with Air New Zealand. Samoa's own Polynesian Airlines is giving away barrels of salted beef and 3lb packs of the corned variety. It has also been known to hand out 10lb packs of frozen chicken.

Samoa's fried-chicken wars have erupted in the same week as the western health terror notched up its latest success: the first no-peanut zones on aeroplanes.

British Airways is reported to have become "the first major carrier to introduce extensive restrictions on peanut consumption to minimise potential risk to travellers who suffer from peanut allergy".

This risk, it seems, comes from secondary peanut inhalation, an expert explaining: "Despite shunning the nuts themselves, the effect of up to 300 other passengers opening their packets at the same time could create a sufficient dust cloud through the . . . cabin to trigger a reaction."

Even the chicken-savouring Pacific region has not escaped the attentions of our modern-day missionaries, the health workers.

From Wellington, New Zealand, comes news that the National Heart Foundation is calling on Air NZ to "lay off fast-food promotions" because they are "reinforcing the status of these high-fat foods".

The foundation said 70 per cent of Pacific Islanders suffered from diet-related health disorders.

Across the ocean in Tonga, King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV is leading his subjects in a patriotic fat-reduction campaign.

Polynesian Airlines, taking the hint, has offered Tongans £5 off each ticket for every 2½lbs shed under the monarch's programme.

Wickes turns its back on do-it-yourself disaster

Roger Cowe

WICKES, the DIY retailer, completed a grim year yesterday with losses of £56 million. But chief executive Bill Grimsey said it was the end of a dreadful chapter in the company's life and it was now moving on to build up business.

The losses were in line with the forecast accompanying last year's £53 million rights issue which restored Wickes' finances. They stemmed from misleading accounting for purchase discounts which is being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office and which has led to the departure of several directors.

The board shake-up was finalised yesterday with the announcement that Robert Burrow and Sanford Sigoloff will stand down at the annual meeting.

Mr Grimsey said performance had improved steadily through the year, helped by the recovering housing market. In the first quarter, sales per UK store fell by nearly 10 per cent but in the last three months the stores experienced 12 per cent growth, on a comparable basis.

Even at the operating level, Wickes made a loss of £18 million before exceptional costs. Following the rights issue, debts have fallen to an average £30 million.

Observers remain sceptical about Wickes remaining independent, and other DIY operators may be prepared to move now the company's finances are clearer.

Saturday Notebook

Market set to rise to new arrivals

Alex Brummer

WITH the strong focus on the payouts which will be reaped from converting building societies, there has been far less attention on how they are likely to perform once they start to hit the stock market next month. This will, of course, partly depend on global equity market conditions, where the tone is more bearish as a result of robust economic data from the US and fears of an interest rate rise.

However, on fundamental and technical grounds it is reasonable to expect that the four societies which will float this year — Alliance & Leicester (April), Halifax (June), Woolwich (July) and Northern Rock (October) — will receive a reasonable reception.

A new analysis by BZW notes that together the four societies will add £20 billion to the stock market value of the bank sector, taking it to £120 billion, which will represent 19 per cent of the FTSE 100 Index and 14 per cent of the All Share.

The newly quoted banks will have a number of attractions, particularly the strength of their brands, franchises, distribution, product innovation and consumer service. They also have robust balance sheets. This is not a guarantee against mistakes: as followers of the TSB prior to the Lloyds merger will know only too well. However, the knowledge that if the newly quoted societies enter into a financial services takeover they could become bid targets, under the new Building Societies Bill, may prove a useful brake on Hill Samuel-type adventures.

The critical technical issue for those receiving shares in the converting building societies is the role of the index tracker funds — which account for 13 per cent of all funds under management in the UK.

Although a FTSE 100 tracker is not obliged to have A&L or Halifax shares straight off, if they are not part of the index and Halifax stock went to a sharp premium then there is a risk of shortfall in performance which may have to be made good.

This suggests that there will be an immediate strong market for the converting societies, offering those who dispose of shares an early premium which could build up over the first year: as good a one-way bet as some of the privatisation stocks.

Blair's peer

AS Lord Hollick prepares for one of the most difficult and high-risk jobs in British public life — the next Prime Minister's favourite business person — he still has some work to do at his United News & Media group. The biggest challenge remains the Express newspapers, where the sub-octane performance is coyly hidden under the sub-heading "consumer publishing".

In business terms the Express remains a problem despite the £38 million already taken as an exceptional item as a result of restructuring costs.

The long decline in circulation does appear, for the moment, to have eased. But no one underestimates the struggle in Britain's mid-market papers where the Express faces the over-resourced Daily Mail group and an assault on its flank from Rupert Murdoch's aggressive pricing policies for the Times. And despite Lord Hollick's belief in a superior kind of journalism, the Express has still had to suffer the embarrassment of Princess Diana's dresses and Mrs T's backing for Michael Portillo: but enough of that.

The broadcasting operations are going well, assisted by a strong period for advertising revenues, which could potentially suffer should the economy slow after the election. Production revenue is also on the up.

This year's real challenge will be Channel 5, where video retuning costs are already slightly more than expected. The budgets there are also seen as particularly tight for a full-service channel, so the challenge there will be finding and hanging on to the right quality of viewers. Lord Hollick is right, of course, to suggest that in the next licence negotiation with the Government it is time for BSkyB to be roped in for its share.

After the addition of Blenheim the biggest part of the group, in profits terms, will be business services, which is going well.

That is better than can be said for financial services, which, although they chip in £50 million or so of reliable profits, look increasingly aberrant in a media/marketing conglomerate. As for Lord Stevens, he seems quietly to have vanished from the management structure — even before he moves into a non-executive role in May.

Banking debacles

IT has not been a great week for the investment banking arms of Britain's high street banks as they seek to challenge US leadership in this area. In a long and detailed judgment, the Takeover Panel, the City referee, reprimanded BZW for its failure to disclose a performance fee in the final days of its takeover defence of Northern Electric, when it piled into the market and bought 1.63 per cent of the shares in a desperate last ditch ploy.

Given the fraught history of such incentive fees — they were at the core of the Guinness affair in the late 1980s — BZW has escaped lightly, although its reputation is tarnished. Not, however, as damaged as NatWest over the mispricing of interest rate swaps.

In the case of NatWest Markets, the real problems have been of management and risk assessment. There may be some relief then that NatWest is sensibly using the skills it acquired with Greenwich Capital, the US bond house it bought last year, to strengthen its global debt market operations. Although the changes apparently have nothing to do with the £90 million hole in NatWest accounts they should provide some reassurance.

The integration of the talents and experience brought in with Greenwich suggests that NatWest Markets will not allow itself to be blown off course by the swaps debacle. Nevertheless, it and BZW have a lot of ground to make up if they are to rate globally alongside JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley.

News in brief

Scandal claims Nomura chief

Hideo Sakamaki, Nomura Securities' president, yesterday became the latest casualty of the illegal trading scandal that had already claimed the jobs of two senior directors.

Despite his resignation, Mr Sakamaki said it was only in February that he became aware of the two directors' activities. The pair had been channelling profits into funds linked to organised crime.

Principal books in

Principal Hotels, the Harrogate-based group which pulled a planned £100 million stock market flotation last autumn, has acquired the 175-bedroom Selsdon Park Hotel and golf course in Surrey — one of the largest privately owned hotels outside London — for about £17 million. The company is believed to be in talks to acquire the 100-bedroom Holiday Inn in Sheffield for about £3.5 million. Both hotels were being sold through Christie & Co.

Mutual benefit

Bradford & Bingley will unveil a "major initiative" on Wednesday to benefit its two million customers. The building society declined to give details, but sources suggest the announcement will involve returning profits to customers as part of its commitment to mutuality.

Gatwick take-off

British Airways announced plans to serve 17 extra destinations from Gatwick Airport. Chief executive Bob Ayling said the move would create 700 extra posts at the airport.

Making rupees

The Bank of England has joined forces with security print firm De La Rue to tender for the contract to supply 3.6 billion 500- and 100-rupee notes for the Reserve Bank of India.

Courtaulds cuts jobs

Textiles group Courtaulds is to close two factories in the Midlands with the loss of almost 350 jobs. The company blamed a fall in the worldwide market for lace and knitted fabrics for the closure of its plants in Chilwell, near Nottingham, and Long Eaton Fabrics, Derbyshire. Another 100 jobs in the region will go as a result of the closure of Nestlé's Lyons Maid ice-cream factory in Stourbridge.

BZW rapped by takeover panel, page 11

Man from the Pru goes a-wooing, page 10

FinanceGuardian

The secrecy that can kill

CONSUMERS may know what has gone into their meat pie by looking at the label. But they have no right to know what was fed to the animal whose meat is in the pie.

Commercial confidentiality lies behind the BSE crisis and this week's revelations about poor hygiene of many abattoirs. Inspectors privately described them as a "potential time bomb", but the Government refused to publish a league table of slaughterhouses on the grounds that such information was "commercially sensitive".

The Government was forced to agree to disclose the information, but in most cases, within the food sector and in other industries, the cloak of commercial confidentiality is keeping the lid firmly on information that should be in the public domain.

Confidentiality imperils health and rights. Sarah Bolesworth and David Waller report

Hidden dangers . . . Michael Masters and his dairy herd paid a heavy price in the name of commercial confidentiality

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS JONES

VASHKA was definitely ill, thought Michael Masters, looking at his dairy cow. She couldn't keep her balance walking uphill. It was time to call the ministry vet and have her examined properly.

That was the autumn of 1988. Five years later, 10 of Mr Masters' 110-strong dairy herd had died of BSE and he had lost his sight after being kicked by a disease-maddened cow.

"What makes me furious is that, while I was lying blind in hospital, the feed producers were lying low, still refusing to say what was in the cattle feed," Mr Masters said.

He discovered the feed suppliers' reluctance to discuss their product a year after he lost Vashka. "We name all our cows," Mr Masters said, somewhat embarrassed. "And when Nancy fell ill after Vashka, my wife and I were really upset. We suspected by this time that there might be animal-derived contents in the feed, but we couldn't prove it. If only we'd realised what we were giving them."

Mr Masters still does not know what the cattle-feed conglomerates put in their product. "They refuse, just as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does, to reveal the contents of the food. In fact, Adas [the government-run advice agency] reassured us that the feed was all right. But, when we insisted on knowing, the companies said that the recipe was 'commercially confidential'."

Now the Masters' Glastonbury farm is supplied by a organic consortium which insists on full contents disclosure. "A company that tries to claim commercial confidentiality for a product that is going into the food chain will never get any business from Mole Valley Farmers," Mr Masters said.

Laura Simons, a public affairs lawyer for the Consumers' Association, was disturbed when she discovered that commercial confidentiality was being used to prevent the release of information about food safety.

"Most people think that, in processed food, labelling law takes care of safety," she said. "But it's not enough and doesn't say anything about material absorbed further down in the food chain."

She was trying to discover what recommendations had been made by the government encephalopathy research group Seac about gelatin — a beef derivative used in many foods and medicines.

Last March, Ms Simons wrote to the Ministry of Agriculture, quoting the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information. The ministry replied that the processes used to produce gelatin were subject to commercial confidentiality, and "it would be inappropriate to make them public".

'Britain needs a sharper legal framework to prevent companies throwing a cloak of so-called commercial confidentiality over their activities and relationships'

Ms Simons tried again, suggesting that an edited version of the report could be made available. Finally, in November, the ministry replied: "There are only three companies who process gelatin, all with slightly different methods, and it would be against their commercial interests to reveal that information."

Such claims to secrecy are affecting consumers' rights, health and safety, and are a long way from the traditional role of "commercial confidentiality", a contractual clause used by businesses to protect intellectual property and prevent industrial espionage.

John Battle, the shadow Energy Secretary, said: "Commercial confidentiality is a screen behind which many British companies hide. Because of anti-trust laws and public information acts, you can get more information in America than in Britain about British companies.

"We need a sharper legal framework to prevent companies throwing a cloak of so-called commercial confidentiality over their activities and relationships. We have made a commitment that the consumer will take priority over the shareholder in terms of commercial confidentiality."

Robert Maclennan, Liberal Democrat president, said: "Commercial confidentiality could become the stock excuse for secrecy, and threaten democratic accountability."

Since Margaret Thatcher set privatisation in motion, the plea of "commercial confidentiality" has become increasingly common. The Channel tunnel fire is one of many near-disasters which have been followed by operating companies citing the escape clause to avoid revealing uncomfortable or embarrassing information.

The Government, through the Open Government Initiative, has endorsed the widened use of commercial confidentiality claims to keep a potentially enormous range of information secret.

Launching the code of practice in 1994, the Minister for Open Government, William Waldegrave, promised it would mean that "anyone seeking information from government departments and public bodies can be assured that their request will be received positively".

But embedded in that code is a long list of exemptions from disclosure, among which is "commercial confidentiality", effectively fencing off the privatised utilities, health service trusts, government departments working with private companies and third parties "whose commercial or contractual activities may be harmed" by disclosure.

Like the catch-all of "national security", commercial confidentiality claims contain the potential for abuse by private companies of the trust placed in them to look after the public interest.

Commercial confidentiality claims are now so common that they should be regarded as a *caveat emptor*. The first question for consumers should be: What have they got to hide?

Secrecy has always been a hallmark of British government and the Open Government Initiative has done nothing to change that. The commercial confidentiality opt-out leaves Britons worse off than other western citizens: in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France, Australia and New Zealand, commercial confidentiality is restricted to areas which do not bring it into conflict with the public interest.

Public health and safety issues appear to take a back seat where some privatised services are concerned. The near-miss involving a West Coast train in July last year proved that the standards accepted for many years by rail travellers can no longer be taken for granted.

The 500-seat London-Manchester Intercity commuter service pulled out of Euston station at 8am. The train was scheduled to make a stop at Watford, 17 miles north of the capital. But when the driver applied the brakes, the 430-ton Pullman's mechanics did not respond. The train eventually ground to a halt five miles further down the line.

None of the passengers will ever know exactly why the brakes failed. West Coast has refused to release any details from its report on the incident. Nigel Harris, editor of industry magazine Rail, said: "If there had been another train at the station, the train would have been signalled to stop. But it wouldn't have been able to stop, and there would have been a catastrophic accident.

"A wall of silence has been erected around the incident, with the company quoting commercial confidentiality as a means of avoiding further inquiry. So much for passengers' rights as consumers, and so much for rail travellers' safety."

The same absence of regard for the public interest characterises the Private Finance Initiative. The Government even claims confidentiality on companies' behalf in its attempt to persuade the private sector to shoulder part of the burden of public building and services — or at least, as last year's investigating parliamentary sub-committee concluded, defer the appearance of such costs on the public balance sheet.

Commercial confidentiality claims also prevented the release to Parliament last year of data on the construction of Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The most expensive hospital to be built in Scotland, the infirmary was at the centre of a round of PFI bids which also included the contracting-out of some NHS services.

Alistair Darling, shadow treasury secretary and MP for Edinburgh Central, said the bidding process was not sufficiently open and that an attempt was being made "to conceal the true cost from the people who are paying for it".

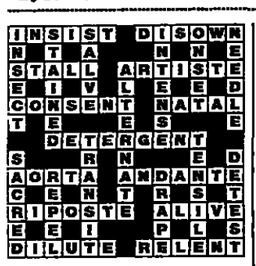
In a written reply to Mr Darling, Scotland's health minister, Lord James Douglas Hamilton, said that the Government was bound by its code of practice not to release information relating to commercially confidential issues. "To do so," he said, "would undermine confidence in those bidding for public sector contracts." Irony is clearly not in this Open Government's canon.

Four of the largest PFI projects are dogged by similar controversies regarding disclosure of bidding companies' shareholders and trading histories. In every case the public interest — taxpayers' money and consumers' rights — have been placed second to private interests.

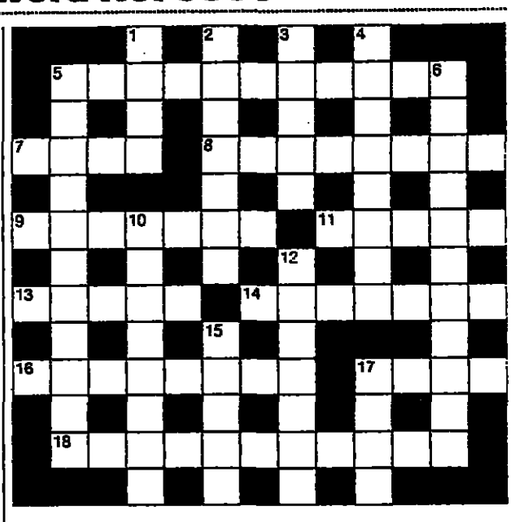
"Openness should be the price of doing business with government," said Maurice Frankel, of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, commenting on the disputes surrounding the PFI. "Commercial confidentiality should not apply when dealing with public money."

Additional research by Simon Kennedy

Quick Crossword No. 8385



Solution No. 8384



Across

5 Marriage (4,7)
7 Grasp — a travelling bag (4)
8 Precise (8)
9 Erased (7)
11 Strong dark coffee (5)
13 Schoolchild (5)
14 Obvious (7)
16 Man-made article (8)
17 Behind time (4)
18 Later of two theatre performances (6,5)

Down

1 Smack (4)
2 Woollen jersey — one who is too hot? (7)
3 Decree (5)
4 Jamb (8)
5 British Army HQ (5,6)
6 Small cooking area (11)
10 Height — fame (8)
12 With darker spots (7)
15 Swoon — rather pale (5)
17 Oafish person (4)

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The Guardian

the week

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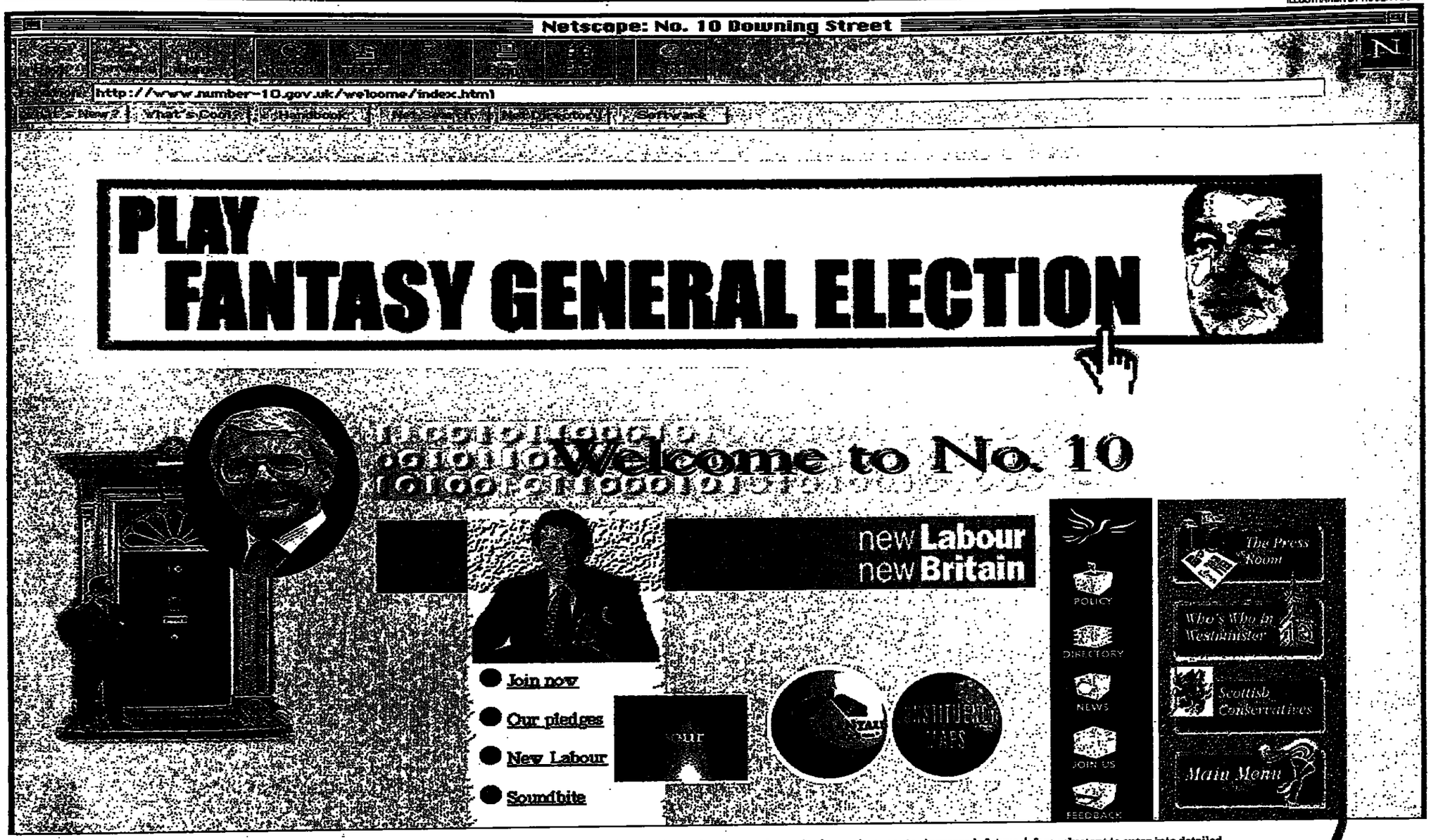

The next election will be fought on the internet as well as on the soapbox. **Simon Garfield** on the soundbites in cyberspace

IN THE last week of February, 51 MPs received personal electronic mail on their computers. I know, because I wrote it. The MPs — 19 Labour, 15 Tories, 14 Liberal Democrats and three Scottish National Party members — were sent an identical, moderately naive question about tax pledges and spending plans, along with a spikier PS tailored to what I imagined might be their political prejudices.

It was an exercise in political democracy. Would MPs soundbite in cyberspace? Would they write freely to someone outside their constituency they had never met? Would they commit indelicacies? Would those weaned on electronic pagers now spread their wings?

In America, Clinton's victory was accompanied by feverish internet activity, much of it from congressmen and senators. In this country, already approximately two million online citizens (Netizens, if you dare) can take a virtual tour of 10 Downing Street, download manifestos, and join any number of political groups, including the Natural Law Party, for which you presumably don't even need a modem. But could the same influence be brought to bear here as it was in the US, and just how far could one go?

And so my journey began. I did not introduce myself as a journalist for fear of influencing the outcome. Instead I wrote: "I'm writing to you as a concerned voter — I got your address from the MPs' e-mail list at the Keele University site. I know there will be an election very shortly, yet I am still uncertain how to cast my vote. I am one of those strange people who would be happy to pay more tax (within reason) if I could be sure that the funds would go towards education and the NHS. Yet all parties now seem to be offering tax freezes (or reductions) with very hazy promises as to increased future spending on crucial services. I'd be grateful if you could tell me how you, personally, stand on this."

To the Conservative MPs, the PS asked about what would happen to John Major if the Tories lost the election, while Labour members were asked their views on Dennis Skinner and Ken Livingstone, and LibDems about a possible pact with Labour.

Spencer Batiste, a Conservative member of the Science and Technology Select Committee, snapped into action immediately, and replied within 90 minutes. Unfortunately, his response said: "Thank you for your kind wishes."

An hour later he wrote again. "Thank you for your e-mail. I am pleased to see that modern technology is helping to strengthen democracy. There is a strict Parliamentary convention that a Member of Parliament only deals with their own constituents. I am therefore reluctant to enter into detailed communication with you if you are not an Elmet constituent."

I mailed back. "Gosh, what a swift reply... Unfortunately I live in London NW3, and not in Elmet, wherever that may be (it sounds very Olde England). I understand that you may not be able to answer specific local questions from someone outside your constituency, but I wondered whether more general questions might be permissible. I do hope you may bend the procedure in this instance. Incidentally, my local MP is Glenda Jackson, who once wrestled naked in mud I believe." I'm ▶page 14

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the week that was

Us on us

The British view

"The real blame must be shouldered by all who fail to take account of weather conditions, drive too fast, travel too close to cars in front, hop from lane to lane or in other ways ignore the rules of safety on our major roads. If we wish to avoid more M42 disasters, the remedy is in our hands. Motorists must drive more responsibly."
Birmingham Post on M42 Motorway crash

"Burglars beware! The householder can fight back with paint mines in Leicestershire. Once stepped on, the device expels a jet of bright paint coating the trespasser. But . . . Leicestershire Constabulary said, "Users could face public liability. People who tread on it could sue. We have great reservations." The device can also be upgraded with gadgets such as streams of smoke or loud bangs."
Leicester Mercury

"The arrival in Portland Harbour of HMP We are brings the crisis in the Prison Service into sharp focus. Few would argue that a prison ship is ideal accommodation for any convicted criminal. However, as a temporary measure, even a prison ship must be preferable to incarcerating prisoners in police stations? Whether custodial sentences are the most appropriate sanction in a great many cases is open to question. Similarly, throwing offenders in jail smacks of political posturing which ignores deep sociological issues. It is self-serving politicking at a superficial level."
Dorset Evening Echo

Them on them

The global view

"Once again, Israel is in crisis. Headlines scream warnings of violence and an end to the peace process if "something isn't done". And yesterday's devastating news of seven killed and over a dozen wounded in the terrorist attack at Naharayim only made the stomach churn more."
The Jerusalem Post, Israel

"Roisin McAliskey is in a jurisdiction which despises Irish political prisoners. Their conditions of imprisonment are designed to torture them and it's time there was an almighty outcry."
An Phoblacht/Republican News, Ireland

"The British bobby is to serve as the model for the future neighbourhood police unit which the Spanish government is aiming to introduce into all provincial capitals. Top-ranking police officers have shown great interest in the functioning of English bobbies, since their work is characterised by greater contact with the local community."
Sur, Spain

Call me bigoted but those humans are mere freaks of nature . . .

THEME OF THE WEEK TWADDLE

Roads Minister John Watts may have been one of the week's outstanding talkers of rot when he revealed to a group of students his desire to bury eco-crusader Swampy in concrete, but there were many rivals for the David Evans Prize for spouting rubbish.

While Mr Swampy himself, speaking from his new tunnel under the proposed second runway at Manchester Airport, responded that the minister was merely being childish, the Labour Transport spokeswoman, Glenda Jackson was getting tangled up in a complicated image in which she tried to convey Watts as a Chicago-style gangster: "John Watts will presumably be changing his name to Don Watts," was how her conclusion came out in The Mirror. *What could she have meant?*

Jack Dromey, national secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, also tried with conspicuous lack of success to coin the masterly soundbite earlier in the week, while celebrating a new deal to harmonise conditions for manual and white collar workers in local government. "In future," Dromey droned on the Today programme, "whether you push a broom or a pen, whether you fry chips or use microchips, all in local government will enjoy equal treatment." Brilliant.

Nottingham Forest's new record signing from Glasgow Celtic, Pierre van Hooijdonk, was not to be upstaged in the twaddle stakes. Forest's crowds may yet take to the Dutchman, but no sooner was he signed for £4.5 million than the sports pages reminded the working class Trent End supporters of one of van Hooijdonk's celebrated sayings.

In rejecting Celtic's final offer of £7,000 a week to stay, the player announced that the money "might be enough for the homeless, but not for an international striker". Perhaps van Hooijdonk will, as they say, redeem himself on the field.

The French environment minister, Mme Corinne Lepage, provided still more competition for the week's stupidest statement. Embarrassed by criticism in Paris that a new draft law she had submitted contained 370 grammatical and spelling errors — MPs described them as "a national disgrace" — Lepage went on the attack. She claimed there were only 96 mistakes, and added, "If I wasn't a woman, my text would not have been subject to much criticism."

It could not, all in all, have been a better week for news of The Diner Party, another fly-on-the-wall TV film by director Paul Watson. Amid an hour-long veritable twaddle-fest, viewers will hear guests at the party express the wish for Britain to be a dictatorship and come out with gems such as "I'm no homophobe, but gays are freaks of nature", and, "I once had a lesbian pony".
Jonathan Margolis

When justice seems to be an ocean apart

This week last year March 8, 1996

"IMAGINE," says Gary Jacobs, "if in this country a prosecuting lawyer stood on the steps of the courtroom and made it plain to the press that he had a personal distaste for this particular villain, and was going to do everything he could to make it as hard for them as possible. It wouldn't happen. But that's what happened with Caroline Beale."

Gary Jacobs, a London-based solicitor, helped Caroline Beale and her parents when she was arrested at New York's JFK airport in September 1994. Beale had been on holiday with her boyfriend, Paul Faraway, and had given birth to a daughter alone in a hotel bathroom.

Suffering from a delusional psychosis, leading her to believe that the baby, Olivia Ann, was already dead, Beale hid her body in a plastic bag and carried it around with her. At the airport, she hesitated to go through a metal detector, saying she was pregnant, and the body was discovered.

As her story emerged following her arrest, the contrast between the treatment Beale was receiving in New York and the way the case would have been handled in Britain became apparent. While psychologists prepared reports, Beale was sent to Riker's Island, the notorious New York women's prison, to await trial. "No one should be sent to Riker's Island," says Jacobs. "But to send someone in Beale's situation there was really offensive."

Marjorie Fisher, who prosecuted Beale's case vigorously, argued against the granting of bail, claiming that because Beale was foreign she would have no incentive to stay in the US. Eventually, however, she was given bail after eight months in Riker's Island and spent 10 months living with families in and around New York before her trial.

The trial was over almost as soon as it begun, after Beale agreed to plead guilty to manslaughter (though she had always maintained that she did not kill her baby) in order to escape a murder indictment. Judge Robert Hanophy sentenced her to eight months imprisonment, five years probation and at least a year's psychiatric care in London.

Having already served the eight months, Beale was free to go home. A year ago this week, Beale flew into Heathrow. She immediately went to the Maudsley Hospital in London to begin her psychiatric treatment which is now coming to an end.

Since Beale's release, tensions between the British and the American judicial systems have been further highlighted. In September, the last remaining British man on Death Row, Krishna Maharaj, made a breakthrough in his nine-year fight to have his conviction quashed. Convicted of the double murder of two men in a Florida hotel room in 1986, the Peckham businessman has been campaigning for the duration of his time on Death Row.

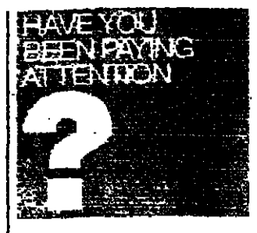
"In the UK, he almost certainly wouldn't have been convicted," says a source familiar with the case. In September last year, Maharaj's lawyer, Clive Stafford-Smith, was given until this month to assemble evidence which might lead to a retrial and the withdrawal of the death penalty. A decision on whether or not there will be a retrial is imminent.

Another current case has resonances of Caroline Beale's experience. British nanny Louise Woodward is facing a murder trial in Boston following the death of Matthew Eappen, the nine-month-old baby in her care. Her lawyers have criticised the grand jury hearing last week which indicted her on a charge of first degree murder. "There was a serious question on the way the evidence was presented to the grand jury," said her counsel, Andrew Good.

Gary Jacobs, not known for his reticence, says that problems of the sort Beale experienced have nothing to do with the accused being foreign. "That's just the way the system works over there, and there's a good deal of support for reforming it," he says.

A word of caution, however, against anyone wishing to portray British justice as superior to that of the Americans came from Beale's psychiatrist, John Dunn, who pointed out that this country has "nothing to crow about. A country that forces pregnant women to give birth in chains has nothing to tell other countries about the treatment of prisoners."
Emily Barr

Justice without mercy . . . Caroline Beale spent eight months on Riker's Island



1. "People might now ask whether they can trust any priest ever again." Who was the doubting Thomas?
(a) Lord Runcie
(c) Archbishop Carey
(c) The Bishop of London
(d) The Bishop of Truro

2. Prince William was confirmed. By whom?
(a) Lord Runcie
(c) Archbishop Carey
(c) The Bishop of London
(d) The Bishop of Truro

3. "I told the referee I wanted to go and feed his guide dog. He promptly sent me off." Which sinner?
(a) Lord Runcie
(c) Archbishop Carey
(c) The Bishop of London
(d) The Bishop of Truro

4. Who is no longer the PM's "honourable friend"?

5. "I have no objection to instruments which vibrate." But who was determined to keep her house in order?

6. Who won Crufts?
(a) Bernard the Toy Poodle
(b) Sybil the Weimaraner
(c) Justin the Yorkshire Terrier
(d) Vom the Crossbreed

7. "Her Majesty's a pretty nice gal." Who went to Buck House via Abbey Road?

8. "No wonder he likes his steaks raw." What led Adrian Targett's mother to this conclusion?

9. What is the name of The S**** G***s' fourth consecutive number one single?

10. David Seaman, Mike Gatting, Brian Moore, Joan Collins. Which party animal is the odd one out?

11. "He won't let Britain down." Who backed Tony Blair?
(a) Ian Greer
(b) Sir George Gardiner
(c) Lady Thatcher
(d) Justin the Yorkshire Terrier

12. "A homely, grandfather image could ruin the action-man persona he has built up." Who?
(a) Tony Blair
(b) John Major
(c) Paddy Ashdown
(d) Cardinal Winning

13. "Integrity may not mean much to you, but it does to us, so consider yourself fired." Over whom was the fur flying?

14. Equity wants the weekly minimum wage for actors to be raised. What is it currently?
(a) £90
(b) £190
(c) £290
(d) £390

15. How often does the Hale-Bopp comet pass the Earth?
(a) Every 3 years
(b) Every 30 years
(c) Every 300 years
(d) Every 3,000 years

Answers, bottom left of this page

Fantasy General Election

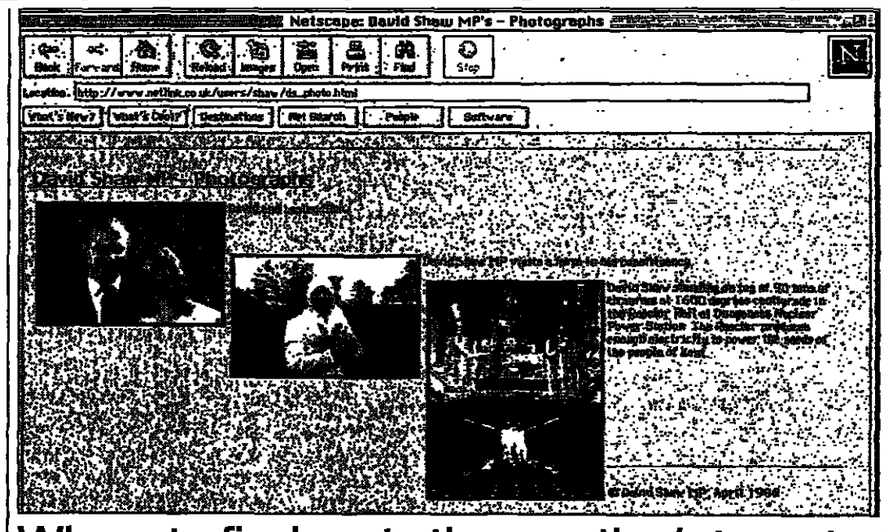
◀ page 13 not sure where the erroneous Glenda Jackson reference came from, but Spencer made no reference to it when he replied the next day. "I am sorry to hear that you are not one of my constituents. You would be most welcome. Elmet is to the east of Leeds."

Courteously he explained that direct taxes were still too high for Britain to remain competitive abroad. He did not think spending on its own was the solution to some deep-seated problems with our education system. I asked him to expand on these problems, and added a fresh new topic. "I see from the Conservative Party's website profiles of MPs that you are interested in philately. Are you as depressed as I am about the current state of the British stamp market? Sometimes I think that no one's collecting anymore..."

Four days later he wrote: "You must appreciate that at this time I am very busy with constituency issues in the run-up to the election." On education he felt "we have a long way yet to go but since 1979 we have made enormous progress. As to stamps, I fear you are right."

Meanwhile, other MPs had also been busy. Within five days I had received e-mails from five Tories, two Labour MPs and two LibDems, most of whom wondered if I lived nearby but replied anyway or promised to send information. Nick Raynsford (Lab, Greenwich) wrote at length, stating that spending would be kept within very strict limits. There was information on how the windfall tax on privatised utilities would get 250,000 people off benefits and back to work, on how cutting red tape would treat 100,000 additional NHS patients, on how more council homes would reduce homelessness.

Anne Campbell (Lab, Cambridge) wrote similarly, but added: "The present personal tax burden is high and we must tackle the reasons for this — the high welfare bill — so that we can spend most of these failure taxes on education and health. Ken Livingstone and Dennis Skinner make a lot of noise but have no influence in the new Labour Party."



The member for Dover . . . David Shaw with his wife, down on the farm and on a pile of uranium

Where to find party time on the internet

Conservative Party
http://www.conservative-party.org.uk
Labour Party
http://www.Labour.org.uk
Liberal Democratic Party
http://www.libdems.org.uk/index.html
Green Party
http://www.gn.apc.org/greenparty/
Liberal Party
http://www.libparty.demon.co.uk
Plaid Cymru
http://www.wales.com/political-party/plaid-cymru/enigishindex.html
Scottish National Party
http://www.snp.org.uk
Monster Raving Loony Party
http://www.raving-loony.pv.org/
Referendum Party
http://www.Referendum.org.uk
Alliance party of Northern Ireland
http://www.unite.net/customers/alliance
Sinn Fein
http://www.irlnet.com/sinnfein/
Progressive Unionist Party
http://www.pup.org/
Social Democratic and Labour Party
http://www.sdlp.ie/sdlp/
Ulster Democratic Party
http://www.www.udp.org
Ulster Democratic Unionist Party
http://www.dup.org.uk/
Ulster Unionist Part
http://www.uup.org
The Guardian has its own web site dedicated to the 1997 General Election:
http://election.guardian.co.uk/

In an elaborate economics lesson, Piers Merchant (Con, Beckenham) e-mailed that "Britain's public finances do not, and have never, worked on the principle of hypothecation — matching specific taxes to specific spending." A detailed explanation followed, concluding with a plea to "remember Gladstone's lesson — cutting taxes INCREASES government revenue."

Paddy Ashdown, the only main party leader to respond (John Major appears not to have his own e-mail, while the Internet Postmaster returned messages to Tony Blair's published address with the news that he is unknown), wrote that the Liberal Democrats had no qualms about linking tax increases directly to expenditure. "We will raise income tax by 1p, to pay for £2 billion investment in education — this will cost the average person 45p per week. We shall also put 5p on packet of cigarettes to pay for increased spending in the NHS, and create a new tax band of 50 per cent for those earning over £100,000 — this will take 500,000 people out of tax completely, and encourage people back to work." He offered more details by post.

SO FAR, no one had offered much to write home about. But then David Shaw addressed his keyboard. The Tory MP for Dover signed himself The Friendly MP on the Internet, and explained that because he received so many e-mails from people outside his constituency he was unable to reply in detail. He then replied in detail, noting that, for him, money was rarely the problem.

"That is because you can increase teachers' pay to £100,000 a year per teacher but if they were trained in a left-wing trendy teacher's training college and they are more interested in their trade union activities than their pupils, then there is no net gain in educational quality."

He felt that the same applied with the NHS. "The problem . . . is that it carries out 40 million operations a year and people think because a few thousand are less than perfect there is a failure of the system which can be solved by money." He signed off with the slogan: "Why use the Channel Tunnel when you can enjoy Dover's Ferries?" I wrote back: "As yet, I have never been sea-sick on the EuroStar, but on those Channel ferries I was vomiting as soon as they left port. Any solutions?"

He replied: "Try ferries over and over and it goes away. If it is really bad you take tablets (legal ones)." This message was sent at 4.27 in the morning, which was extremely dutiful, if a little sad.

Shaw included a plug for his home page on the World Wide Web (and stressed that it was not funded by tax-payer's money). There, he teased, you could enter a competition to win a bottle of House of Commons Scotch or (for teetotallers or those under 18) a House of Commons book.

I visited the site, and found three charming photographs: Shaw with his wife, Shaw visiting a local farm, and Shaw "standing on top of 90 tons of uranium at 1600 degrees centigrade in the Reactor Hall at Dungeness".

All six questions in the competition seemed a little biased. For example: "Which Government is the only Government in the history of the Health Service to have cut the hospital building programme in cash and real terms?"

His site links to many other political pages on the Web. Indeed, in a country just weeks from an election it seems that interest in on-line politics is expanding rapidly.

In recent weeks, Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown have both participated in on-line Q & As, and the LibDems and the Tories have used the net to transmit party political broadcasts. The first page of the LibDems web site shows Ashdown standing in front of a crowd of ecstatic young supporters with a flashing logo that reads: "Fantasy general election. Think you can do better? Prove it." The Guardian has its own election site (see panel), including daily news bulletins and debating forums.

At another address, General Election '97, an unaligned site funded by sponsors and advertising, there are about 700 pages, including a comedy section. One topic for discussion reads "If democracy is government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people, why not use the net to cut out the politicians?" Earnest users have pointed out that most voters still don't have a computer, let alone Internet access. And those that do may not always be trusted: one discussion group is pondering Tony Blair's inability to name all the Spice Girls.

On another site, a more complex experiment in accountability has been running since November, and is concerned with far more than the election. UK Citizens Online Democracy, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, has already hosted debates and consultations on European monetary union and Brent Council's budget.

Irving Rappaport, the site's director, notes that in America, research conducted after last year's election showed that 98 per cent of those that accessed the political sites did use their vote. "The Web enabled them to make up their own minds in a far more informed way than they could otherwise."

Rappaport regards e-mail as a great challenge for MPs. "They will use the medium to talk directly to their electorate. They can effectively bypass the media. It gives them incredible power, and incredible responsibilities. E-mail is not a one-way process."

BUT IT can seem like one. Back at my electronic mailbox, there were concise replies from Stephen Timms, Clare Short, David Porter, Nigel Jones and Timothy Kirkbride. Most were solid, predictable answers, some with unpredictable spelling (new houses were needed "despeparetly").

But two weeks after my first mail-shot, 32 MPs — about 60 per cent — had still not replied. (some of my mail came back unseen due to bad addresses or faulty software). More Tories replied than the rest. No one said awful things about a LibDem-Lab pact, or put the boot into Major. In particular I regretted not having heard from David Evans.

I concluded that my hit-rate was still faster, more efficient and cheaper than more traditional forms of communication, and had produced some friendly information. But I wondered about the no-shows. Were they bored with the new medium already, or just bored by the questions?

For either reason, 1997 is unlikely to go down as the year of the Electronic Election. But it may yet be remembered as the year we downloaded David Shaw's wife.

Quiz answers

1. (c) Archbishop Carey, criticising his predecessor Lord Runcie for being indiscreet in interviews for a recent biography.
2. (c) The Bishop of London. The Right Revd Richard Chartres was apparently the choice of Prince Charles, who has a poor relationship with Archbishop Carey.
3. (d) The incoming Bishop of Truro, the Right Revd William Ind, refusing to apologise for being sent off in a "friendly" hockey match against the Mothers' Union.
4. Sir George Gardiner, who defected from the Conservatives to the Referendum Party. As he is now in opposition, the PM should refer to him as "the honourable gentleman".
5. Betty Boothroyd, Speaker of the House, who said she would accept the use of vibrating pagers, but that they shouldn't bleep or be used as "an *aide memoire* by Members addressing the House". Brian Wilson had made a point of order based on a prompt received on his pager.
6. (c) Justin the Yorkshire Terrier (aka Ozmillion Mystification). Vom, owned by Treasury Minister Phillip Oppenheim, was named Westminster's Dog of the Year.
7. Paul McCartney, who went to Buckingham Palace to receive his knighthood. The words come from the song, Her Majesty, on the album Abbey Road.
8. DNA tests discovered a familial link between Adrian Targett, a Somerset teacher, and the 9,000-year-old Cheddar Man, a Somerset hunter-gatherer.
9. Mama. They are the first band to reach number one with their first four singles.
10. Brian Moore, the former England rugby international. Moore announced his support for Labour; the others attended a party in honour of the Prime Minister.
11. Lady Thatcher, in comments made to the Times's editor. Justin the Yorkshire Terrier — barking according to critics — is believed to support the Referendum Party.
12. (c) Paddy Ashdown, who was reported to be worried about the imminent birth of a grandchild.
13. Naomi Campbell, who was sacked by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) for modelling fur in Milan.
14. (b) £190. Equity want it raised to £250.
15. (d) Every 3,000 years. Miss it next week and you may have a problem.

How you rate

0-4 Shih Tzu
5-9 Poodle
10-14 Terrier
15 Top dog

هكذا من الأصل

Neil Pearson gives a perfect soundbite on politics or the Equity dispute. Great cheekbones, too

The dry wry private lad

Interview by CHARLES NEVIN

Neil Pearson ... providing exactly the picture wanted with an air of slight embarrassment at having to do it PHOTOGRAPH: EAMONN McCABE

LOOK at the picture. *Familiar*, isn't he? It's Neil Pearson, the actor, star of Between The Lines and Drop The Dead Donkey. *A lot of* people didn't catch him in Rhodes recently, but I don't think we should blame him for that.

There's a sheen to him, though, isn't there? This is, after all, "the sexiest man on television". We decided that he would arrive at his Soho club in a leather jacket. And *so it proved, plus the* regulation three top buttons on the shirt undone. He could give us an hour of his time, he said, and he meant an hour, "so the one last question routine at four o'clock just ain't going to happen".

Actors. Pearson posed for the camera and I prepared for another *actor* interview. *Mates, bloody* hard work, insecurity, what critics don't realise, you know the sort of thing. Pearson seemed pretty promising. Not only was he here to talk about Equity's threatened boycott of subsidised rep unless managements agree to a minimum wage of £250 a week, but he *is also famous for not talking* about the private life of the sexiest man on television.

But ignorance has its rewards. The first sign that Pearson might be a little different was when he managed to combine providing exactly the picture wanted with an air of slight embarrassment at *having to do it*. The second was his articulate, unflashy, well-briefed resumé of the Equity case. He's quite funny, too. After the hour, I decided that the sexiest man on television was all right. You see what you think.

The dispute. Equity want £250 a week, plus £75 a week subsistence. Management prefers £200. Equity is threatening a boycott unless management comes round. Pearson was at the Equity press conference *earlier* in the week. "I was asked time and time again why Equity was taking this action, and I simply said because £250 doesn't seem a lot to ask. There didn't seem anything else to say."

Pressed, he expands: "For far too long, the subsidised theatre in this country has been subsidised by the people who work in it. The worse thing that has happened to subsidised theatre is getting saddled with the word subsidised. It's not a subsidy, it's an investment producing a big fat profit, year in, year out. What we are saying is that the economics godsend that is *the arts industry in this country* should get some recognition in the amount of money that is ploughed back into it."

Pearson rattled off the figures: average non-manual working wage in this country £390 a week, manual £281, three per cent of workforce employed directly in arts industry, British Tourist Authority estimate that £2,000 million of tourist money is directly attracted by arts. As for the management *claim that* £200 a week represents a 31 per cent increase, Pearson quotes former Equity general secretary Peter Plouviez: "Thirty per cent of precious little is fuck all."

There you have it: big picture, small picture, figures, sound-bite, shock. This boy should be in politics. He was, briefly, on screen, in a Labour party political broadcast; and, more tellingly, as the Tony Blair figure in Guy Jenkins's *small classic last year, Crossing* The Floor. But no further: "I don't have any desire to be a politician. I don't have any of the qualities that would make a good politician [disbelieving noises off]. I'm simply a punter with an opinion."

His Blair figure was a particularly finely-drawn mix of surprise, teeth and blandness concealing calculation and design. Any disservice it might have done to New Labour worries him "not a jot". Crossing The Floor made "some very important points ... I don't believe you can sell politics the way you sell coffee."

So do not ask him to label his politics: "Life is more complicated than that. Take this social justice we hear so much about. What does it mean? It would be social justice, *for example, to have an equal age* of consent. But that's not Labour Party policy, and I see no sign of it becoming Labour Party policy, so social justice is not Labour Party policy. Selective social justice isn't justice at all, it's privilege.

"That sort of thing irritates me. I'd much rather niggle away at *anomalies like that than set out* my stall and say here I am, just slightly left of Tribune but not as far as Campaign. I'm not interested. Forget it."

Pearson doesn't do adverts. "I'm not evangelising about it. The only reason, it seems to me, to do ads is the money. And I don't need the money. I also think there's a difference between pretending, which is what I do for a living, and lying, which is quite often what advertising is about. But anyone could easily point out that I advertise myself all the time, and my shows, so to some extent I am in the advertising business. I'm just a little more selective than some."

But this is all beginning to make him sound more po-faced than he should. You need to factor in the south London laddish dry wryness. And I haven't got on to the sexiest man bit yet. First, I want to float the one about actors affecting not to take acting too seriously.

Pearson doesn't rise. "I've never treated it as a vocation. It's what I do when I'm not doing the rest of my life. I love doing it, I love the *life-style it affords me, and* I love the opportunity to show off; but I've never felt that aura of importance around acting that many actors seem to feel."

'I think there's a difference between pretending for a living which is what i do, and lying, which is often what advertising is about'

The rest of his life. Pearson is unmarried and 37. Vast legends have been erected around this, helped by former female friends saying nice things about him, mostly to Nigel Dempster, and Pearson saying nothing. Large theories have been floated about his panel-beater father leaving the Battersea family home when Pearson was five.

In my modest way, I have a go, using as a pretext his widely-*praised performance as Nick* Hornby's weekend dad in the film adaptation of Fever Pitch. Actually, it isn't out until next month, and the wide praise comes from someone in the office who has seen a preview and thought him wonderful. Pearson is taken with this: "Pearson is Brilliant — Some*one In The Office. I can see it up on* the posters now."

But he's not taken with any great mining of angst. "I'm not a method actor, God forbid. I'll support anything that works. But I go home at the end of the day, I don't tear myself to bits over my job."

He will talk happily about his schooldays, at Woolverstone, in Suffolk, a boarding school that threw deprived London children together with the children of service people posted abroad: "They took children from Labour backgrounds, put them in a Conservative setting, gave them a liberal education and turned out anarchists. It gave me the feeling there wasn't anywhere that wasn't for me, that wasn't for the likes of me." He will reveal that he likes *travelling, Orwell, Updike* and Nabokov; and that his sister is a croupier and his brother a piano tuner.

But, beyond that, I am told to remember what sort of newspaper I work for. "It only interests you because I won't talk about it. It would bore you to death the *minute I talked about it, of course* it would. The trouble is that the press has an absolute inability to distinguish between privacy and secrecy, and as soon as you try to insist on privacy they assume you have a secret that you don't want them to know about. Actually, you have a private life you don't want them to know about, but they assume you're shagging sheep."

Actorly pause.

"Dolly hasn't spoken to you, has *she?*"

Nothing for it but to raise the sexiest man in television. I complement myself for taking 40 minutes to get round to it.

"It's about time, frankly," says Pearson, who confirms I am one of the rare men to have interviewed him. "I'd rather people *found me attractive than vomited* on sight, but I never know what to say. I've sat people down, workmates, friends, whatever, and I say you're being interviewed and I'm the interviewer, and I'm going to ask you a question — 'Sexiest man on television. What do you feel about that?' And I haven't got a *good answer yet.*"

Does he hanker, like many an actress, for age to dim his beauty and allow him to play parts of character? He snorts. "It will come soon enough. There will be people with cheekbones far pointier than mine coming along to take up the mantle." (Fan note: his cheekbones may owe something to the Chippewa Indian a maternal forebear married last century.)

What next? Maybe we should *talk* about acting. No. "That's a nightmare. As soon as you start trying to explain how you act, you're straight into Private Eye. do not pass go — and quite right, too. If you want to look stupid try to explain what it is you do for a living as an actor. It's suicide."

But the luvvie thing, he feels, is an old joke now, and not always helpful. "I was at the press conference for the Equity campaign, and there I was praying, please, nobody come up and kiss me on the cheek, because if you do, no one will listen to a word we have to say." I am both glad, and in a way, sad, to report that no one did. This *time, they're clearly serious.*

As for Pearson, the hour is up, and he's off, as advertised. But he did pay for my half of lager before he left.

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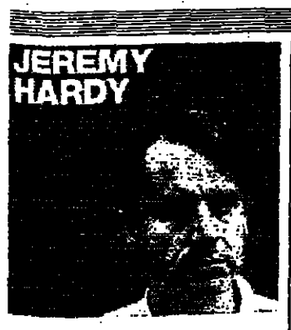

JEREMY HARDY

New Labour welcomes gays but not socialists

WHAT a week, when both a High Court judge and the Shadow Home Secretary seem to have an enlightened view about something. Mr Justice Lightman has referred the case of a sacked gay serviceman to the European Court of Justice; and Jack Straw has promised that New Labour will lift the ban.

Clearly, those opposing the rights of gay men and women in the services are fighting a losing battle. *Homophobes* in the defence community have almost abandoned the argument that gay people in the army, navy or air force are no good at their jobs.

Indeed, given that life in the services involves short hair, communal bathing and cavorting around in big boots and combat trousers, it seems a bit pointless to join-up if you're *not* gay. On the surface, the armed forces appear to be the Village People writ large. It's just a shame that a glamorous career, awash with high camp, retains the requirement that applicants must have an interest in slaughter.

The sole argument against homosexuality in the services now seems to be that it is "bad for morale". A young man who is showering in preparation for the horrors of war might be put off if a gay colleague catches sight of *his willy. Worse, the two might* desert and open an antique shop together.

In contrast, service chiefs take a fairly relaxed attitude to the continuous racial and sexual harassment that goes on in the forces. Presumably that is good for morale; it hones the vicious instincts of those inflicting it, and the victims of it have to toughen up or get out.

Jack Straw says he'll let gays join up. He has also pledged *to* repeal Clause 28 and standardise the age of consent. New Labour probably hopes that the sooner *young gays* settle themselves into stable relationships, the sooner they will get their private pension arrangements sorted out. And it is perhaps because New Labour is not progressive in any other way that it can afford to be gay-friendly.

When the Labour Party was still trying to live down a reputation for socialism, the last thing party leaders wanted was to be associated with gay rights. Now that they have proved beyond doubt that there will be no discrimination against the wealthy and avaricious under a Labour government, they feel able to extend the same tolerance towards gays.

And *Jack Straw appears* genuinely unthreatened by diversity of sexual preference, which is curious given that he seems to be *petrified by everything else. When* he coined the expression "squeegee merchants", it sounded at first like a picturesque term of abuse for gay men. I waited for him to dub the homeless "pavement biters" and children who stay up past their bed-times, "Newsnight bandits".

I'm not sure whether homophobia is more or less reactionary than a fear of strangers cleaning *your windscreen. One might argue* that squeegee merchants chose their life-style, but the theory won't stand up to close examination. I suggest that militant gays wrong-foot Straw by demanding the right to be squeegee merchants. This might cause Straw to liberalise his attitude to the practice.

Jack Straw seems unthreatened by diversity of sexual preference. Curious, given he's petrified by everything else

In any event, at least one form of *egalitarianism* is alive in the Labour leadership. One thinks back to the shambles that followed Peter Tatchell's selection in Bermondsey. *It began with the* leadership trying to disown him and ended with them defending him on the basis that the very idea of his being homosexual was an appalling suggestion. In the climate of today, Tatchell's sexuality might not be a problem for Walworth Road, although his self-confessed socialism certainly would.

Tatchell's politics were held against him even then. He questioned the role of the monarchy *and predicted that the Docklands* development would be a disaster. And he had avoided the draft in Australia because he didn't want to slaughter Vietnamese people in line with American foreign policy.

It seems a bit sad, therefore, that one of the main campaigns being fought by gay activists today is over the right to kill complete strangers for a living. One can't ask all oppressed people to gravitate toward the left. The philosophy behind the tea-and-knighthoods-at-Number-10 strategy is *that the more respectable, busi*nesslike, and patriotic you are, the more likely you are to be accepted.

Thankfully, this is not a line that Peter Tatchell seems to take. I'd like to think that Britain's shameful role in the Gulf, the Falklands and Northern Ireland would prevent anyone with a thought in their head from wanting anything to do with the armed forces.

THE continued incarceration of *Roisin McAliskey is intolerable*, regardless of her health. When a person is labelled a "bombing suspect", they sound very scary. But she has not been charged, and the German prosecutor who seeks her extradition has only put forward the flimsiest case. And shouldering a coffin is not a paramilitary action, whoever is in it.

Motormouth, the cabbies' guide to mobile advertising

A MOBILE phone company wants to pay taxi drivers to plug its products to passengers. Every other part of our national life has been commercialised, so there's no real reason why ordinary conversation shouldn't be as well. But why cab drivers? I don't pay attention when they're on immigration or crime, so why should I listen to their views on mobile phones?

The people who should get the dosh are the real opinion-formers. This would also solve the problem of the dinner guests who appear in a new Channel 4 fly-on-the-wall documentary. Instead of boring on about castrating homosexuals, they could be paid to promote stuff to the people who would really listen, their friends. It would be like a modern version of those advertising magazines in the early days of ITV.

"You look well, George, large as life and twice as natural, ha ha!"

"So would you, Trevor, if you had the peace of mind which a Scottish Widows pension provides. Still working you to death at that office of yours, are they?"

"Not now we've upgraded to the new Xenos range of high-performance computers which make multi-tasking child's play for today's hard-pressed executive. By the way, Tricia, this kumquat crumble is scrump . . . Uh, oh! Mea culpa and all that, but I'm afraid I've spilled some on the tablecloth."

"But that's no problem with Stainaway, George . . ."

OF COURSE advertisers won't do any such thing, because they can't be sure of what the punters would say. Admen are control freaks, and control freaks make more mistakes than the rest of us. Take the present Labour Party's "two-faced John Major" hoarding. At the middle of the poster, where a vertical lock of Major's hair meets its reflection, they form, together, a precise image of the most intimate part of a woman's body. Thousands of people up and down the country have noticed this, but apparently it escaped all the geniuses who made the ad.

I LUNCHED this week with an old American friend who worked with Gary Hart until Hart's presidential chances were wrecked by his brief affair with Donna Rice. It was probably the first time the mainstream American press had ended a politician's career by investigating his private life (and, if President Clinton is anything to go by, may have been the last).

Doug told me — with considerable relish — that Hart was still living happily with his wife in Colorado, "*but the Miami Herald* reporter who wrote the story is now divorced". (At the same lunch

Every other part of our national life has been commercialised, so why not our conversation?

I learned that the single most common request for information from British travellers going to the States was where to find the exact spot in Hollywood where Hugh Grant was caught with Divine Brown.)

AT THE end of last month, a referee called Mike Reed gave what turned out to be a decisive penalty against Leicester in an FA Cup replay with Chelsea. He was almost certainly mistaken, but in sport, this kind of thing happens all the time.

But Mr Reed was quickly taken off the job of refereeing the next match between the sides and was last spotted officiating a match between Dorchester and Woking. (He has been re-instated, perhaps because Leicester think he will now be biased in their favour.)

Meanwhile, the broadcaster Danny Baker was so outraged that on Radio 5 he called on fans to picket Mr Reed's house and abused callers who disagreed with him. As a consequence, the BBC fired him. And a group of Leicester fans have started a unique action against the Football Association for trauma suffered as a result of the penalty.

"Our solicitor says we have a very strong case," said one (though if they were to win compensation, all professional sport might have to end tomorrow). Some pompous buffoon writing in the Mirror warned that any more decisions like Mr Reed's would cause riots: "And people will get killed."

All this from one dodgy decision, which must have taken around half a second of the referee's time. I wonder where it will end. It must be a bit like 1914: "Who is this Franz Ferdinand, and where the hell is Sarajevo?"

WE'VE just had a blissful weekend at Hampton Court, where you can rent a couple of properties inside the palace. It cost us a bit, but the memories will glow for a very long time. As the tourists leave at 4.30pm, you have the place to yourself, except for the other people who live there, and who can be seen gliding down colonnades or glimpsed on the other side of the courtyards. We took the children on "Spooky Tours" after dusk, searching for Ann Boleyn's ghost among the shadows.

In the morning we could walk through the gardens, which are now thick with crocuses and daffodils. *We learned how to navigate* the Maze without getting lost, and the incredibly helpful staff, in bottle-green Edwardian uniforms and sawn-off toppers, unlocked secret doors to show us hidden rooms.

On Sundays there are heart-stoppingly lovely choral services in the Chapel Royal. We learned that as the grace-and-favour apartments empty through death or departure, they are not now re-let and will be claimed back as public rooms. Admirable I suppose, but sad as well, since the last vestiges of real life in a Tudor and Georgian court will then have vanished forever.

Do political parties leave blacks out of their policies? Michael Howard versus Maurice Mcleod

Can vote, won't vote

Maurice Mcleod, a black journalist, will not vote as he says the parties ignore him. Think again, says Home Secretary **Michael Howard**, the ballot box is the best way to change things

Dear Michael,

WHEN John Major decides to go to the country, it will be the first general election in which I will have been eligible to vote. Last time, the community charge and my impoverished student status kept me off the electoral register. Yet I have no intention of wasting a perfectly good half-hour some Thursday traipsing to the polling station to put my X in a box.

My position is not unique or even unusual. Like most young black people I feel no compulsion to take part in a political system that largely ignores me. That is not completely true. Black males do have a role in the sound-bite politics of the 1990s: we are the statistics, the crime wave, the unemployed, the inner city deprivation. We are the problem that politicians spout about trying to solve.

There are no progressive policies aimed at improving our lot. Labour's stake-holding society will not include me. While politicians ignore me, I will ignore them. Until the politics of this country have something positive to say to me, I won't be listening. It is safe to say that you endorse the parliamentary system. Most politicians harp on about democracy and the struggle for suffrage, but these are meaningless words if there is no power to change society behind them.

For as long as I can remember, the Tories have been in power, ignoring Britain's black communities. Now Labour is promising to do the same. Why should I waste time voting for people who don't know, or care, if I exist?

Yours sincerely,
Maurice Mcleod,
The Voice

Dear Maurice,

I BELIEVE it is vitally important that everyone who can vote does vote. Democracy is the cornerstone of life in this country. Those who have gone before us fought for it. People in other parts of the world are still fighting for it.

As a Conservative I believe passionately in opportunity for all — irrespective of sex, colour or creed. Our policies are designed to improve the quality of life for everyone living in Britain.

As Home Secretary, I have worked hard to ensure that our law protects the public not the criminal. *One of the most hateful* crimes is racial harassment. And our proposals in the Protection from Harassment Bill — currently before Parliament — will help to protect those who are targeted because of the colour of their skin. Racist bullies will face up to five years in prison.

Governments do listen. So do political parties. But exercising your right to vote is the most effective way in which you can influence the way governments behave. Your vote is a priceless inheritance. Use it.

Yours,
Michael Howard

Dear Michael,

THANK you for the party political broadcast, but your answer sums up every thing that turns me off about politics. You appear not to have read a word of my letter, and are hell-bent on rolling out the same tired old political points.

You invoke the memory of people who battled for the right to vote but fail to mention what drove their struggle. The right to vote is valuable, but what is important is the ability to change our rulers if we disagree with how we are being governed.

In the last 18 years an underclass of low-paid or no-paid have seen the rest of the country speed away from them on a wave of greed. In the past, the black community and the working class, two groups that often overlap, may have looked to Labour to change things, but New Labour only offers the same policies with different soundbites. Ask yourself why Swampy, the tunnel-dweller, has received so much support. It's because he is trying to change things.

You may not be interested in whether black and working class people (who would probably vote Labour) stay away from the polls. But Swampy's support is not confined to liberal Guardian readers; it includes the Daily Mail brigade. That should give you pause. Politics is losing all substance and voting is becoming pointless.

Yours,
Maurice

Dear Maurice,

ELECTIONS do make a difference. Take 1979. The British people voted for a change because they did not like the way they were being governed. That newly-elected Conservative Government changed things, dramatically. And we have built on these changes since. If people do not exercise their right to vote, then they should not complain about the result. Protesters like Swampy have always received public support. But it is the job of political parties to develop policies to benefit everyone, not to be driven by single-issue pressure groups.

We have pursued policies to raise living standards for all. Next year the average family will be £100 a week better off than they were in 1979. There is more to be done. No one denies that. But these are not "tired old political points" — they are the facts.

Yours,
Michael

Dear Michael,

THE right to vote is an essential part of democracy, but so is having something worth voting for. At present any politician who says anything slightly challenging is crushed and forced to make a *hasty apology. If democracy is so* sacred, politicians should be able to say what they believe in and then answer to the public.

With numerous inquests into the deaths of blacks returning verdicts of unlawful killing but no one found culpable, black communities' trust of the system is stretched to near breaking point.

Black people are disproportionately represented in the lower-income bracket, so when you talk *about the average British family* being £100 a week better off you still miss the point. We are not the average family, we are among the poorest families. Politics for a lot of black people is not about what party is in control, but about what food is on the table.

Politicians are not prepared to concede that taxes are necessary to alleviate poverty and that harsher sentences on those found guilty of crimes are not enough. *Parliamentary politics* will be irrelevant until somebody is willing to tackle crime by eradicating the deprivation that spawns it.

Yours,
Maurice

Dear Maurice,

POLITICIANS can put forward challenging ideas without being howled down and they frequently do. Last week Peter Lilley set out proposals to guarantee a secure pension for all. Stephen Dorrell has outlined plans to improve the delivery of long-term care. And I'm looking at radical ways to reduce delays in our courts. These are important issues and have been sensibly discussed. No one has had to issue apologies. We have all been free to say what we think.

I am aware of concern in the *black community about deaths in* police custody. Successful policing requires the police to work with local people, to gain their trust and support. The police are working hard to do that. Wherever there is a death in police custody there is always a full investigation.

I share your anger at our failure to bring the murderers of Stephen Lawrence to justice. That is why we are looking at the possibility of giving the prosecution the right to appeal when the judge halts a case before it reaches the jury.

There is no doubt that the greatest cause of poverty is unemployment. Business — not government — creates stable, lasting job opportunities. And a low-tax economy creates the conditions in which business can flourish. Unemployment is now at its lowest level for five years. And is continuing to fall here, while it rises in Europe.

Crime prevention is vital. Two weeks ago *we set out proposals for locally-based Child Crime Teams to* identify children at risk — perhaps because they play truant or have a drug problem — and help tackle factors which make them vulnerable. But if people commit crime they should be punished. For a first-time offender, that may mean a caution. For a less serious offender, a community punishment. But those who persistently commit crimes, or who are a danger to the public . need to be sent to prison.

Yours,
Michael

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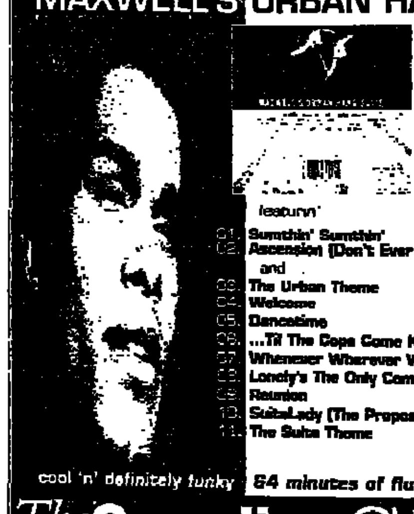

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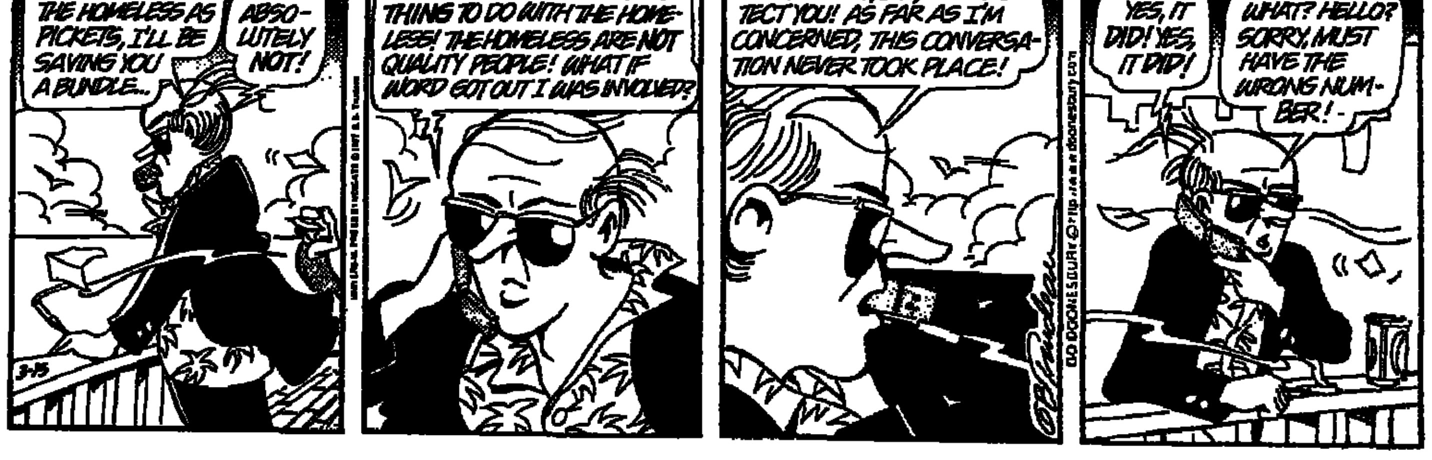

SMALLWEED

A SHAME that the Penrith and Border constituency appears to be landlocked. If it wasn't, Smallweed would recommend that the prison hulk moored off Portland should be stuck there instead, in tribute to local MP and Home Office demon letter-writer, David Maclean. It's not true, as some allege, that carping critics have failed to suggest any alternative location. The Lib Dem peer Lord Harris has recommended the waters off Folkestone, the Home Secretary's constituency, while letter-writers to Dorset papers have advocated a berth on the Thames at Westminster to spoil MPs' terrace views. Assuming the rivers around Penrith are too narrow to take the convict ship, Smallweed's preference would be Maidstone, the constituency of prison minister and future Scunthorpe FC manager Ann Widdecombe (you might squeeze it on the Medway near the barracks); or Dover, as a warning to the people of that town of what might befall them should they, on May 1, re-elect Britain's least enticing MP, David Shaw.

A rebuttalist with a pager interrupts me to comment: Expressions like "prison hulk" and "convict ship" are desperately pejorative. Pejorators like you should learn from the MP for Weymouth and Portland, Ian Bruce, who recently told the Commons: It is not a prison — it is a *floating facility*.

Fair Play *(Wyke Regis) writes:* Is Austin Healey, England's new scrum half, the first car to be picked for its country?

Smallweed replies with a snort: Certainly not. What short memories some people have in Wyke Regis! What about Armstrong Siddeley, the flying Cambridge University wing who would have won many more caps had his career not coincided with that of Prince Obolensky? Or Morris Cowley, the 18-stone Moseley second row forward who played against Scotland at Murrayfield in the 1961-62 season, but was dropped for the next game, at Twickenham, after groundsmen complained of the indentations he made in the pitch? Few now recall the buccaneering French full back, de Dion Bouton, but I would have thought that his opposite number at Parc des Princes in January 1937, Aston Martin — later Tory MP for Beckenham South, until that unfortunate thing with the actress — would have struck a chord here and there. If you widen the field to include women's rugby, then of course there is also the flank forward Mercedes Benz, who played for an Adolf Hitler select XV against Nuneaton seconds in March 1939, but took little part in the game after failing to return from a pit stop.

THE AUTHOR, Smallweed reads at the front of somebody's novel, "has asserted her moral rights". Fair enough in the case of this book, but what about others distinctly less salubrious? Would a new edition of the works of the Marquis de Sade state at the outset: "the author has asserted his moral rights"? Immoral rights more like. Does this formula likewise occur in, say, Irving Welsh ("all the usual Scottish *grime gothic," writes Smallweed's* literary adviser), Helen Zahavi ("Dirty Weekend heroine murders a man for looking at her, then picks up a few old boys in Brighton and slits their throats just for fun") or John King ("Paki-bashing and hanging out with Combat 18 yobs in the Shed at Chelsea")?

A pedant writes: It seems to have escaped your notice that the Marquis de Sade died at Charenton in 1814. How could a man dead these 183 years be said to have asserted his moral rights?

Smallweed wearily ripostes: Oh, all right then. Would it say: "The Marquis de Sade has *posthumously* asserted his moral rights"?

A MESSAGE from "dave.babs@zen.co.uk>" (I think this formula means that people from the Internet are asserting their moral rights): "Knowing of Smallweed's passion *(obsession?)* about new phrases, I wondered if he saw the following. In an article about old jeans in Thursday's '——' *(I've deleted the name of the publication here, since it's the Guardian).* 'I called Levi's and overnighted them pictures.' Is this the first sighting in the UK?

In this form, Dave.Babs — meaning: to send overnight — probably yes. Until now, the verb to "overnight" has implied an overnight stay, as in: "Fascinating as they were, these familiar tourist sites were not a patch on the places where we overnighted: the quaintly-named Ferme des Saltimbanques (Tumblers' Farm), the remote Metairie de Cedellian, the apple-scented Domaine du Bac." I wish I could claim to have made that up, but I have to admit that I took it from a piece in the quaintly-named Sunday Times.

THERE was a time when our cherished agriculture minister was known as plain Douglas Hogg. During his recent sufferings that seems to have changed to "Embattled Douglas Hogg". This adjective was applied in the Independent on February 14, the Mail on February 18, the Press Association service on March 5 and 6, the London Evening Standard on March 7, and the Financial Times, Guardian and Telegraph on March 13. (Returns for yesterday's papers are not yet available). It would not surprise me if his formidable wife now addressed him as Embattled, rather than Douglas.

Or perhaps as "Batty", for short.

Wole Soyinka has been charged with treason by the Nigerian government. From his US exile, the Nobel laureate pours scorn on the accusations

If the world won't help, we must fight alone

WHEN I wrote in my latest book, The Open Sore of the Continent, that "the judicial murder of the Ogoni nine and the continued decimation of Ogoni people was the first Nigerian experimentation with ethnic cleansing, authorised and sustained by the Nigerian despot General Sani Abacha", some critics in foreign ministries described this as the language of an activist given to dramatising his opponents' action.

Prior to this grotesque display of savagery by General Abacha, he had acceded to the plot of the chieftain of his Ton-Ton Macoutes, Ismaila Gwarzo, to fabricate a coup d'état. Those who succeed as, or are suspected of acting as, couriers of details of the secret kangaroo court proceedings of those alleged to be involved in the coup, are rounded up, tried in minutes and sentenced to stretches varying from seven years to life imprisonment.

The standard charge is "concealment to treason". The chairman of the Campaign for Democracy is already among the victims of this madness and the two ex-military rulers of Nigeria were also jailed for "levying war against the Federal Republic of Nigeria". Countless others have been held without being charged-for the crime of "association" *with the so-called coup plotters*. Yet none of this appears to be a sufficient signal to the world.

Now that Abacha has prepared a list of 14 people, myself included, for a charge of "levying war against the Federal Republic of Nigeria by conspiring with others to explode bombs" and "causing explosion in several parts of Nigeria", perhaps some will see why Ogoniland is only the model for the actualisation of a totalitarian onslaught on liberated, politically sophisticated sections of the Nigerian polity which *have dared* expose and confront the power obsession of a minuscule but obdurate hegemony.

The only way Abacha knows to deal with political opposition is not to negotiate, discuss or debate, but to liquidate its leaders. And if he cannot contrive this physically through his executioners (as with the more than 200 demonstrators mowed down by his soldiers in 1993), then he'll seek to repeat the phantom coup d'état or the tragic Saro-Wiwa experience.

This time, he is biting off more than he can chew. However much Abacha may harass or intimidate *the democratic opposition, our* central position remains that Abacha is not the legitimate president of Nigeria and his regime is not its legitimate government, any more than an armed robber is the legitimate possessor of the property he has stolen.

It is very difficult for us to be surprised by this predictable despot and his gang. The build-up had been clear from the outset. If I had been in Nigeria when the coup was engineered, I'd have been the first on the list of those to be arraigned. Although I am not an Ogoni, I would probably have featured in the list of those sacrificed for speaking out against genocide *in Ogoniland*.

So this whole orchestration has been set in motion since I became Abacha's most prominent nemesis. I was supposed to have been in Benin Republic on January 28, attending a meeting of labour leaders and students, where "we planned to disrupt the local government election".

At the time in question, I was in Davos in Switzerland at the World Economic Summit and among my witnesses are Nelson Mandela, Yasser Arafat, Kofi Annan and Binyamin Netanyahu. Yet the regime's intelligence came out with the details of my meeting in Benin Republic on television!

Under threat, all those who protest, like the demonstrators defiant in Lagos in 1995

As though this was not enough, Abacha granted an interview to the Washington Times newspaper in February, where he repeated the allegation that I am a terrorist responsible for all the bomb blasts in Nigeria. The Washington Times is now facing a libel suit for the indiscretion of publishing this blatant lie.

I and other members of the democratic movement are already condemned to long jail sentences for another "treasonable offence". This combination of diversion, bloody-mindedness and lies will not intimidate the opposition into silence. Neither will it confuse any discerning observer as to the true state of things in Nigeria, which is the reign of terror unleashed by Abacha. Dissent in Nigeria will not go away until Abacha has gone.

Yet it is important to put Abacha into perspective. He knows that he is nothing without his foreign collaborators in Nigeria's agony.

What further proof is demanded by the world? Why have African leaders — heads of states and revolutionary veterans — failed until now to halt Abacha's repetitious game or to challenge his transparent ploy of purchasing time? Take the regime's elaborate charade called "transition to civilian rule". Even as it becomes clearer by the day that Abacha, ever the ludicrous imitator of his predecessor Ibrahim Babangida, is seeking to perpetuate himself as a civilian president, foreign governments continue to say let's wait a little longer. Really, he has promised us, he has given his word that this time, once this latest exercise is over, he will make his pronouncement.

Now that Abacha says it is his constituency's decision whether *he should run or not, and that he* will not be the first military man to seek electoral veneer for his dictatorship, the world continues to wait on him.

However, just in case the compliance of his hypnotised watchers and consumers of Nigerian oil begins to wear thin, Abacha has stumbled on the perfect plot: concoct treason charges against Soyinka, Enahoro and others, and while that case drags on in the court in which he is judge, jury and executioner, declare your presidential ambition.

Yet the world watches in cold complicity as this conspiracy to eliminate all real and imaginary opponents to Abacha's dictatorship is concretised. Even though the world knows that nobody credits the work of a judiciary ousted from the right of adjudication on any issue that involves the military, its regime and its servants.

In fairness, Nigeria watchers also know a few local collaborators, some of them with impressive radical pedigrees, who assist them in rationalising any situation. They also know elements within the political class who also reinforce their alibi for inaction — and even for covert diplomatic sustenance of the terrorist at the helm of power.

Those governments that believe that Nigeria's Godot is just around the corner in the labyrinths of Aso-Rock Fortress are no friends to the Nigerian people. They have forgotten their own history or, for reasons best known to them, have chosen to patronise us, to treat us as second-class subjects of the historical process.

Perhaps, though, their intent may be to deliver the message that we do not hear, or that we are too complacent in the certitude of justice to understand: which is that *our destiny rests in no other hands* but ours.

If that is so, we welcome the distressing signals and their implicit challenge. Our commitment remains to the enthronement of genuine democracy, as expressed on June 12, 1993, and to the permanent removal of the military from our lives, in whatever guise they may appear. This, we know, is no small task but we are prepared for a marathon.

Flash cash on delivery

It's bonus time in the City – but are the huge payouts fuelling greed? By **Julia Finch**

ILLUSTRATION: STEVE CAPLIN

THE young men who sit in front of the banks of screens in City dealing rooms look forward to the weeks before Easter in the way that the rest of us get excited about Christmas. It is their festive season — a time for giving and receiving. But it's not trinkets that change hands in the Square Mile during March, it's fat annual bonus cheques. And they are getting bigger every year.

The culture of yearly bonuses which can be more than many people will earn in a lifetime has been highlighted again this week. One of the top merchant banks, Schroders, revealed that the bonuses it pays to 1,000 of its staff have risen by some £45,000 a head — to an average of £225,000 each. The average pay at the bank, including the relatively lowly sums earned by secretaries and post-room staff, has rocketed from around £75,000 last year to more than £90,000 this year.

Meanwhile, NatWest Bank announced its decision not to pay out £8 million in bonuses after uncovering a gaping £90 million "black hole" of losses caused by one or more of its City traders. But, though NatWest won't say how many people are affected, it is less than 10. And it didn't even include one of NatWest's star traders, Jean François Nguyen, who has been suspended while the bank investigates the loss. Nguyen received a £3 million bonus last year

This year, the banks and brokers in the City of London are paying out record bonuses. Add them together and, according to one firm of City headhunters, the 1997 grand total is likely to top half a billion pounds.

It is not exactly money for nothing. The financial services industry in the UK employs 600,000 people, half of them in the City. It earns £20 billion from abroad and makes up 6.5 per cent of GDP.

Nevertheless, the bosses of some of Britain's public companies must be fuming. Their annual reports spell out exactly what their directors earn, and the top men at some of the privatised utilities have had to endure public vilification for their salaries.

Top cats

CAROLE GALLEY: The Ice Maiden, is deputy Chairman of Mercury Asset Management and the City's highest paid woman — £1 million salary package last year. Can hold the fate of companies in her hands.

MAURICE THOMPSON The transfer of Thompson and colleague Michael Cohrs from merchant bank Warburg to rival Deutsche Morgan Grenfell is believed to have moved City salaries up. The 30-year-olds were wooed on the promise of salary packages worth £7 million each over three years.

JEAN-FRANCOIS NGUYEN Managing Director of Global Derivatives at NatWest received £3 million bonus last year. Suspended by NatWest Markets while it investigates £90 million trading loss.

KAVEH ALAMOUTI Lebanese maths wizard and arbitrageur — making huge profits for his Japanese bank employer. His reward: £9 million. Family man who lives in North London. When his windfall was revealed by newspapers, he sent them all handwritten Christmas cards.

NICOLA HORLICK Mother of five, presided over pension funds worth £18 billion before she was sacked this year, allegedly for considering decamping to a rival bank. Bonuses of £2 million reported.

Yet their rewards pale into insignificance compared to the cash earned by some of the City's anonymous young dealers. A survey of company finance directors this week showed that there is increasing bitterness and hostility towards City traders.

Six out of 10 finance bosses in ordinary companies believe City bonuses should be curbed. They spoke of a "greed culture", which "devalues the efforts of those who make the money that the traders move around". Even the Bank of England is starting to worry. It reckons the rewards on offer to some traders are so high they might be tempted to take outrageous risks to hit their targets.

If a gamble pays off, dealers might get the equivalent of a lottery jackpot, but if it doesn't, the worst that can happen — apart from their employer potentially losing millions — is that they lose their job. And even if they are booted out, they often walk away with a bundle of money. Their *employers hate to admit they have* been hit by losses and will pay off traders whose deals have gone spectacularly wrong to ensure their misfortune never becomes public knowledge.

But *after a series of public scandals*, from Nick Leeson and the Barings debacle to this month's NatWest affair, the Bank of England seems worried that there are a lot of accidents waiting to happen on City trading floors.

It wants banks to double check their monitoring systems and bring in more "earn-now, pay-later" bonus systems so that traders don't earn bonuses on business that eventually turns sour.

That would at least put a stop to episodes like that at Barings, where *top men demanded their bonuses* from the Dutch bank which stepped in to rescue Barings. Other City-watchers want dealers fined if they overachieve — on the basis that they must be taking too many risks.

Not everyone is unhappy about the bonus bonanza. London estate agents and purveyors of quaint country cottages along the south coast are rubbing their hands in anticipation of this year's City handouts. The City's finest investment minds tend to spend their windfalls — on penthouses, sports cars, cottages, Alpine chalets and yachts.

The Financial Times recently carried a job advert offering two City posts with a basic salary of £1 million. One of the posts even boasted "no management experience necessary". A third job with the same firm promised "unlimited" rewards. The lavish terms, bank bosses constantly explain, are absolutely necessary in order to get the best staff. These traders, it seems, can't work to their best abilities, if they are not "incentivised" with the possibility of at least tripling their salaries with an annual bonus.

It is strikingly like football. Star players get mega salaries and win huge bonuses. If a dealing team does particularly well, its members will be wooed away to join other teams. And that can involve enormous transfer and signing-on fees.

The man at the centre of the NatWest scandal illustrates the point. Kyriacos Papouis, aged 29, got good A levels and went to Keele University before joining NatWest Markets as a graduate trainee. Six years later, and still a "junior" trader, he was paid around £80,000 a year and a US rival reportedly offered him a salary of £100,000, a guaranteed bonus of £100,000 and a signing-on fee of £100,000.

Twenty years ago, City bonuses hardly existed. Then came the 1980s takeover boom. The development of "derivatives" markets, where highly numerate young men trade highly complex futures and options products, provided more jobs with big bonuses. The markets were developed as a service to enable ordinary compa*nies to hedge their trading risks*, but have since taken on a life of their own. Banks buy and sell, using their own money, for their own profit.

The first really big bonus went to Kaveh Alamouti, a North London mathematics wizard, who worked for a Japanese bank and *bagged a £9 million bonus out of* his deals. But, in the last few years, the bonus culture has become even more widespread. Fund managers, the men and and women who manage our pensions and unit trusts, have jumped on the bandwagon. Housewife-superstar Nicola Horlick who was recently sacked by Morgan Grenfell, had evidently clocked up £2 million in bonuses.

Carole Galley, is another fund manager making millions. The woman known as the Ice Maiden is one of the City's heavy hitters. Her company, Mercury Asset Management, owns so many shares it can hold the fate of a company in its hands. *She netted a £1 million* bonus last year.

Needless to say, Wall Street sets the pace on salaries. Any UK bank or broker who wants to compete in the same market has to offer the same rewards, and at the moment the only way is up.

Last week it was announced in New York that Joe Roby, the president of a US investment bank which has just bought a foothold in the UK, got a 78 per cent rise last year — taking his salary to more than $33 million, or £20 million; $24 million of the total was his bonus.

It is only a matter of time before the same sort of figures come to the City of London.

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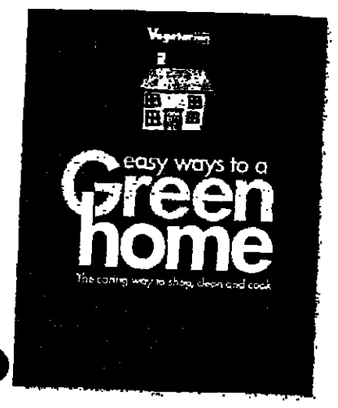

arts

SHOOTING STARS

Rising: Lara Croft

Up . . . The byte-sized heroine of Playstation smash Tomb Raider breaks hearts as she gambols through cyberspace in skimpy togs.
Up . . . Lara Croft, a singer from Reading, is the real-life incarnation of the Sony siren. Next week, she releases her first single, Raider.
And Away . . . Plans are afoot for Tomb Raider movie, which could propel Ms Croft to a more fleshly fame.

Falling: Terry Wogan

Going . . . Terry's at the top of the tree, with a thrice-weekly chat show. Then, in 1992, 'Wogan is axed' to make way for Eldorado.
Going . . . Last year, Terry lashes out at the BBC, arguing that quality had been sacrificed for trivial light entertainment and quiz games.
Gone . . . Terry's given a chance to redress that balance; he's to take over as presenter of that highbrow, alternative, educational bulletin, the National Lottery Live!

The Chinese refused to let Jean-Jacques Annaud shoot his film in Tibet. No problem, said Annaud, we'll make it in India. Then they stopped him filming there, too. **Laurence B Chollet** catches up with one of the world's most determined film-makers — in Argentina

The race for Tibet

JEAN-JACQUES Annaud does not like doing things the easy way. Nor does he like to admit defeat. Take his movie of Umberto Eco's novel, The Name Of The Rose. Set in a monastery in the Middle Ages, the French director spent months checking out most of the monasteries in Europe. He never did find the one he wanted — the one that "captured the right emotions" — so he built his own, and it became the largest set in Europe since the filming of Cleopatra.

Now Annaud is recreating Tibet — in Argentina. The French director is positively Panglossian about Seven Years In Tibet. "Not being able to shoot in Tibet has not been a problem for me," he says. "If I had been authorised to shoot there, I would have had to give a Chinese image of the country. It wouldn't reproduce the spirit of the 1940s and 1950s when my story takes place. Our efforts here have two levels: one is to make a very good, entertaining movie; the other is to make a movie that is going to witness the culture of Tibet as it was."

For the past four months, Annaud has been working on a $60 million production that stars Brad Pitt, David Thewlis and 150 Tibetans from around the globe. The film, based on a true story, stars Pitt as Heinrich Harrer, the climber who set out to scale Nanga Parbat in India, was interned by the British during the second world war and escaped by climbing over the Himalayas into Tibet. There, he became an adviser to the young Dalai Lama and discovered Buddhism. Thewlis plays Peter Aufschnaiter, the climber who accompanied Harrer.

The project has involved Annaud himself in a mission — to complete the first big-budget movie about the early life of the Dalai Lama. His rival is Martin Scorsese, whose film Kundun is based on the Dalai Lama's autobiography and is written by Melissa Mathison, aka Mrs Harrison Ford. Both projects have run into difficulties with the Chinese authorities, who complain that Scorsese's film is an attempt "to glorify the Dalai Lama", the living symbol of Tibetan independence, and is "an interference in China's internal affairs". And both films are supported by the Lama — Annaud's gives a role to the Dalai Lama's sister, Jetsun Pema, who plays her own mother, and employs Tenzin Tethong, one-time prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile, as an advisor.

FILMING in Tibet was never an option for Annaud. Since the Chinese invaded the country in 1951, driving the Dalai Lama from the country in 1959, they have ruled the "Land of Snows" as a conquered province, repressing Buddhist culture. So the French director planned to shoot in northern India and spent nearly six months and $1 million scouting locations, only to have the Indian prime minister's office call off the shooting, reportedly in response to pressure from the Chinese.

Undeterred, Annaud upped his tents and moved the production halfway around the globe to western Argentina and the Andes, an area that he knew bore a striking resemblance to Tibet. That seemed to settle things — until December, when Annaud found that he, Pitt and other members of the production had been black-listed by the Chinese-run Tibetan tourist office and are now forbidden from entering Tibet — and China.

"This has been the most political film I have ever been involved in," says executive producer Richard Goodwin. "The Chinese do not want to be criticised. What they did in Tibet, they feel, is an internal problem of theirs."

In Argentina, Annaud built the film's 40-odd sets in the suburbs outside Mendoza, a European-style city in the foothills of the Andes. The detail is astonishing: the streets of this fake Lhasa are littered with dung — from real yaks which Annaud had imported for the film.

China has not been the only obstacle to the filming. There's also been the small problem of Brad-O-Mania. There has been a commotion among Argentina's teenage girls since Pitt's arrival at Buenos Aires airport in September, when he and co-star Thewlis wound up being chased across the tarmac, Beatles-style, after security guards tipped off fans. But Seven Years is on schedule and budget — and set to wrap this month after climbing sequences have been shot in the remote stretches of northwest Canada.

Meanwhile, over in Morocco all hell has been let loose. Mathison and Ford are allegedly furious that Seven Years has stolen a lead on Kundun and will almost definitely be completed first. They feel that the studio has procrastinated over the movie — after all, it is more than three years since they first visited Tibet to research Kundun.

Back in LA things aren't much happier. Disney has been faced with a huge dilemma — do they follow their conscience and support the Dalai Lama, or do they take heed of China's warning that if they go ahead with the movie the firm's planned expansion into China will be threatened?

Here in Argentina Annaud is patiently applying himself to the task in hand. He is known to spend three to five years on a movie, mastering the topic — be it the anthropology of early cavemen or the architecture of colonial Vietnam.

"There's a reason why this man takes several years before he does another film — it's an experience for him," says Brad Pitt. "Ask him about The Bear, and he'll tell you how he painted fields to get them to look right!"

Annaud's energy is evident as he orchestrates the coronation scene of the young Dalai Lama on a set that has transformed an old garlic warehouse outside Mendoza into a replica of the Tibetan Hall of Good Deeds. The set is breathtaking: it rises three storeys and covers nearly 9,000 square feet; 30-foot prayer banners dangle from the balconies, while the walls are frescoed with dozens of colourfully painted Buddhas.

As row after row bow to the young Dalai Lama, a wave of human flesh rolls through the vast hall, pointing the way to the only Western face. Pitt, as Harrer, is near the last row in a simple robe. He is bowing — and that's the point of the scene: he has traded in his western ego for Buddhist compassion and become a part of Tibetan culture.

Annaud says: "Harrer is a man who leaves his country very famous and very unhappy. He returns after his stay in Tibet with no possessions except himself. And he is very happy indeed!"

The director is fascinated with exploring the clash of cultures and its effect on the human heart. In Quest For Fire, aided by Desmond Morris and the late Anthony Burgess, he developed four different tribes — each with their own language and culture.

After the film was shot, Annaud still wasn't happy with the language of the fourth tribe, so he flew in a tribe of Inuits from the Arctic Circle, and put them to work in a sound studio in Toronto — dubbing. The fourth tribe now had a language Annaud liked; Inuit. He talks about the importance of the image, how a good image should "ring a secret bell in your heart."

Pilgrim fathers . . . The entrance to the Forbidden City of Lhasa, recreated in the suburbs of Mendoza, Argentina
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID APPLEBY

To ring the bells in this case, Annaud, a talented photographer, spent months travelling around Tibet and Tibetan settlements in Bhutan, Nepal, and India. He took 21,000 photographs, which covered everything from shots of The Potala to portraits of Tibetan children in rural villages. He assembled the pictures into books which became the gospel for his production departments. "When you dig into a country like that, it is not only about landscapes, architecture. It's about a people," he says. "I look at their costumes, their shoes, the way they braid their hair. It's not only getting to understand the behavioural aspect, but the mind of a people . . . their soul."

The emotional core of his cast have been the 75 Buddhist monks imported from Tibetan settlements in India. Some were born and raised in Tibet and lived through many of the events in the film — including the Dalai Lama's coronation. That experience has added a profound reality, Annaud says. "This film is coming out of memory." He points out that only about 10 seconds of the actual ceremony was filmed, because of poor light.

On the Chinese front, all has gone quiet. Last month Deng Xiaoping died, Hong Kong is ever closer to reverting to Chinese sovereignty; and there are probably bigger fish for the government to fry than two films racing to pay homage to the Dalai Lama. Many supporters of Tibet believe both Scorsese and Annaud have to take advantage of the lull if their films are to have a political impact.

Back in Argentina, Tenzin Tethong says: "The Tibetans, I think, are quite happy that someone has chosen to use this incredible medium to tell their story. They feel this way because what happened in Tibet is not a finished story. Something quite precious has been lost in Tibet, something that may be precious for the world."

This week, Michael Billington bemoaned the death of the public play. Royal Court director **Stephen Daldry** takes him to task

Get real, old boy

I MUST challenge your notion that young writers are scared of writing about the "great drama of public life". They may well be bored with it, or find it irrelevant, or find the real politics elsewhere — but surely not "scared".

From my experience we are enjoying a generation of young writers who are demonstrating a strength and optimism unseen for years.

You seem to hanker after the younger generation apeing both the subject and form of an older established generation writing on the whole for a more established older audience.

I do not believe the new audience, like the new writers, share your concerns — it is illogical to expect young people who have grown up at a time when the class struggle in Europe has been won by the capitalist classes, to bemoan the fate of liberal humanism. Cultural energy is not to be found in debating the crisis in education, or the decay of the monarchy etc. These subjects may be important but many of the new writers are not hankering after a journalistic debate. They tend not to look back in regret but forward with rage in the search for a more profound morality.

Pigeon-holing new writing is fraught with dangers. Gone are the days when we would refer to "social realism" or "the debate play" as the dominant means of expression in new theatre writing. Authenticity — the by-word for quality control throughout much of 70s and 80s — has been blown apart by the new poets, exploring language and character unshackled by the limits of actual experience. Others are passionately writing about the politics of despair, or the politics of the imagination, and some are even engaging in the debates you constantly demand of them, but often using dream, memory, sensuality and eroticism.

For a producing theatre it is not possible to induce the single voice of a generation, simply because there is no such thing as a cohesive generation to talk to. Our awareness of social, political and cultural fragmentation should result not in a demand for a coherent voice of dissent (especially expressed in the 70s "debate play" — that surely is just being scared of the new) but rather in a celebration of a new generation of writers, searching vigorously for understanding, who are vocalising the diverse chorus of dissent this country so desperately needs.

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TRAVERSE
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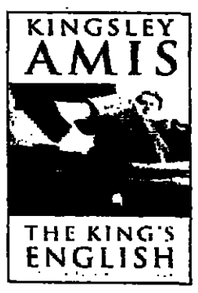
Book of the Week

What a cunning linguist



"My interest in words as parts of language preceded their appeal to me as units of literature of any sort, and I was learning how to spell some individual words before I knew what they meant"

Kingsley Amis had been playing with the idea of a book about the use of the English language for many years. He finished *The King's English: A Guide to Modern Usage* shortly before his death in October 1995.

Hardback £16.99 (+ £1.99 p&p)

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CHANNEL SURFING
STUART JEFFRIES

Dear Daria

AT 2am, caffeinated beyond sleep, only US sitcoms dubbed into German will do. *The Nanny*, a woeful import that Sky screens on the same Thursday evening as the exquisite Seinfeld, is never funny in English. The premise — repressed Limey toff hires mouthy New York broad to look after his cute kids — is too self-conscious for comedy to thrive.

But on the German station RTL, The Nanny is strangely watchable. Double takes after incomprehensible but guessable dialogue, Brooklyn-accented cuddling with the kids rendered in (who knows?) a sassy Bavarian dialect — these are what make the show funny. It begs all sorts of intriguing questions. Is the canned laughter in English or redubbed? And do Americans laugh differently from Germans at bad sitcoms?

Channel surfing is a private business. To flip through 47 channels, never settling to anything more than two minutes of The Fugees video on The Box, or the sluggish shame of English basketball, is something you can only do alone. Sometimes, true, this activity is the symptom of a pitiful attention span, flitting through a world of apparent choice, unable to engage with anything. Unless there's something really intractable on the Hellenic station.

But sometimes channel surfing puts one in a superior mode of consciousness, brought about by multitasking between different programmes and sustaining a pleasurable interest in them all. The other week I flipped between *The Krays* on Sky Movies and a sanitised version of *Midnight Run* on BBC1. On its own, neither would be very entertaining, but to flip between the two was a solitary joy.

Part of the pleasure was how violent macho talk became ridiculous in both films: in The Krays, full-on Cockney bad-mouthing ("We'll have to do that ponce over. He's having a laugh") was never as upsetting as what Ron and Reg actually did to their fellow East End hoods. In Midnight Run, the Beeb's dubbing of De Niro at his most delectably foul-mouthed ("I'm gonna kick your freakin' ass, you freakin' freak") was undermined thoroughly if you took the trouble to read his lips.

When surfing, one always returns to MTV, the home of inattention. No one, surely, could have watched the first part of the documentary series Girl Power this week without realising this is not a feminist account of recent pop but another excuse to show Spice Girls and Alanis Morrissette videos. There is, though, one MTV programme that keeps one's attention engaged for more than three minutes: *Daria*, the cartoon spin off from Beavis And Butt-head. Better than its bastard ancestor, it's about a dysfunctional teenage girl, whose voiceover is done by a woman with a voice as sexily sardonic as Lilith's from Cheers, and who is blessed with a script from heaven. Typical dialogue: Dad: "How's the self-esteem coming, kiddo?" Daria: "My self-esteem teacher said that being addressed all my life with childish epithets like 'kiddo' is probably a key source of my problems." "Really?" "No." I could watch this stuff, alone, delightedly, for hours.

The fans are older, their knees are shot and they can't dance any more (if they ever could). **Dave Simpson** joins James's sell-out tour

Wrinklie riot

The conversion

IT FELT a bit like a party for homecoming war heroes. All around, clusters of boys clad in Manchester-ish fashions nodded excitedly, a floppy-hatted thirtysomething tripped over his own shoes, spilling beer everywhere. He got up, dusted himself down and started smiling again, and then said this: "I've seen this band for 11 years. I'm not as good-looking as I used to be and I can't even dance like I used to 'cos my knees have gone. But James have never let me down."

There must be thousands of similar refugees from the James wars. Some, presumably, carrying scars; like those present at Leeds Astoria in 1985 when the gig-cum-riot ended with drummer Gavin Whelan holding his bass drum above his head as chairs rained down around.

Or the group of us who hitch-hiked 300 miles to see them play in the pouring rain near Colchester. We sat in a tent with umbrellas up as the rain came in through the roof and the band ploughed on through brilliantly idiosyncratic folky rock songs such as Folklore, about sexual stereotyping. Oh yes, they don't write them like that any more. Not even James. In recent years they've dabbled with stadium rock, apeing U2 to the extent of roping in Brian Eno. But we're all survivors here, and James themselves have come through splits, rucks, record labels not releasing records and some truly terrible albums to come "back" — what, again? — with a bang, a hit single, a sell-out tour, and an opening song called, appropriately, Come Home. Ask anyone what it is about James that inspires enduring devotion and they'll just say "the magic, the emotion".

The magic was late. I arrived to find the stage in darkness and a horrible metallic grinding emanating from the PA. A technical problem? No, just one of the more experimental moments from the new album. Odder still, the kaleidoscopic light show appeared to have been borrowed from Pink Floyd. That's Pink Floyd, '67. Somewhere in the psychedelic fog, remaining original members Tim Booth and Jim Glennie then finally delivered the Magic.

Pressure's On started the flood, a dark and magical Nick Cave-y tale of obsession, offset by thundering drums. How Was It For You? recovered from a sluggish start to deliver something stirring and anthemic and although Sound was predictable down to pinpointing exactly when the vocalist-cum-demented marionette, Booth, would start to semi-yodel, it was impossible not to be swept along in the fervour they generated.

They offered spirit with content, not least during the finale, Sit Down, when the entire audience sang words about unity with the mentally ill. James left to an ovation and this once-betrayed fan was there at the end of it, one man clapping and the last of thousands.

The Opposition is packed with corrupt politicians ready to sell their souls for a sniff of power. No, it's not 1997 – its 1907. **Michael Billington** on one of the century's best political plays

Liars and cheats

The hit

WE TALK a lot about political theatre. Very few plays, however, deal with the way the power-structure actually operates: Shakespeare's Coriolanus, Schiller's Wallenstein, Trevor Griffiths's Occupations, David Edgar's The Shape Of The Table leap to mind. To that list one should add Harley Granville Barker's Waste, one of the best British political plays of the century and one that gives Peter Hall's new tenancy of the Old Vic a tremendous send-off.

Waste, dealing with a radical politician destroyed by private scandal, had a famously chequered history. Granville Barker's original version, written in 1907, was banned by the Lord Chamberlain: an act of political censorship masquerading as moral indignation. As Penelope Gilliatt once pointed out, "In terms of sexual conventionality, the play commits no more offence than a Victorian melodrama." But the ban helped to kill off Barker's adventurous management of the Royal Court. In 1920 the play was finally licensed and Barker took the opportunity to re-write it in the light of recent political events. It is this 1926 version that Peter Hall currently presents.

But why is the play so powerful? Partly because it deals with the intersection of politics and morality. Henry Trebell, an Independent MP, is the architect of a Bill to disestablish the Church of England and use its funds to finance new schools and colleges. The Tories, expecting to regain power after an election, plan to absorb Trebell into the Cabinet and appropriate his Bill. But when Trebell has a fling with a married woman who dies after aborting his child, the Bill is scuppered and Trebell discarded.

On one level, the play is about a tragic flaw in the English character: possibly one in Granville Barker's own. Politically, Trebell is an idealist: emotionally, he is heartless. He is fired by the idea of turning unwanted country houses and abbeys into new universities; yet he casually seduces Amy O'Connell, discards her instantly and, even after her death, brutally dismisses her as "a trull". Granville Barker pins down the divorce between ideas and sensibilities that runs right through English life: something Michael Pennington's superb performance as Trebell perfectly catches. There is an astonishing moment when, having learned that Amy is bearing his child, he returns to the practical business of political manoeuvre with almost schoolboy relish. The Bill, you suddenly realise, is his real baby: the one that he is most anxious not to see aborted.

A woman wronged . . . Felicity Kendal plays Trebell's abandoned mistress PHOTOGRAPH: HENRIETTA BUTLER

But Granville Barker, who spent much of his life on committees, also understood the dynamics of power; and his play's most compelling scene is the one that shows the putative Tory PM realising that he will have to jettison Trebell to hold his Cabinet together. Trebell is not so much ruined by scandal — the silence of the dead woman's husband is easily bought — as by a battle for the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. Granville Barker's real originality lies in showing the political process at work: in particular, the way a radical proposal that would transform British life is at the mercy of private ambition. And it is not difficult to see parallels today with Tory politicians distancing themselves from Europe in order to improve their chances of gaining the leadership.

There is one premise in the play that I find hard to swallow: the idea that the Conservatives would back a radical Bill to rob the Church of its vested interests. But what Granville Barker understands is the way politics work; the way visionary ideas are bedevilled by short-term ambitions and private character-flaws. Although he inherits the conventions of society melodrama, he was also a sexual realist. At one point Trebell says to Mrs O'Connell, "When you arched the instep so, I could hear the stocking rustle" — a sudden touch of Pinter in a play about high political society.

It is the ideal work — unfamiliar but analytical of English public life — with which to kick-start the new Peter Hall regime at the Vic. And he directs it with the same alertness to the interaction of character and ideas he recently brought to Oscar Wilde; though I wish he would do something about a downstage chair that, for those on the extreme left, blocks the view of Denis Quilley's Machiavellian Tory leader during a crucial scene.

The casting throughout is on the highest level: fine performances not only from Pennington but from Felicity Kendal as his wantonly abandoned mistress, from Anna Carteret as his celibate sister who, like himself, is a stranger in matters of the heart, from David Yelland as a doctor privy to political secrets and from Peter Blythe as a High Church Tory who, as someone says, explains why the symbol of the early Christians was a fish.

The Old Vic promises 12 plays performed in repertory over the next 40 weeks: the irony is that, if it continues to operate on this level, it will offer a direct challenge to the National Theatre which was largely the brainchild of none other than Harley Granville Barker.

In rep, including Sundays, at the Old Vic (0171-928-7616).

WAVE RIDING
ANNE KARPF

Fairy stories

LET'S declare a moratorium: no more fairytales until after the millennium.

At first it was fine. The rediscovery of fables in the 1960s allowed a new generation to play with allegory and reconnect with and renew a mythic tradition. But enough is enough. If I hear one more reimagined fairytale, I shall arrange for the Big Bad Wolf to maul it with his molars.

It was Diane Samuels's **Hardly Cinderella** (Radio 4) that did it. Samuels is a fine dramatist with a strong sense of the mythic: her Kindertransport was outstanding, and last year's Swine dazzled. But this time she's tried for a surreal (oh, curse the word) re-reading of Cinderella and has ended up with an infuriating pantomime modernism.

Cinders is dead, and her grieving husband decides literally to fill her slippers; since only the foot of their daughter Princess Amanda fits, he resolves to marry her. At this point I fancied that Samuels intended something darkly comic about incest, but since fairytales offer writers the irresistible opportunity of piling on episodic adventures, our Amanda flees only to encounter the Ugly Sisters (now gravediggers), and a winged boy called Boo whose mother was a goose and father a woodcutter. Angela Carter has a lot to answer for.

In the end Amanda meets a Prince of her own, naturally rejects him (contemporary fairytales have a feminist as well as a satirical spin), and heads off with an anthropomorphic Bear. I look forward to Samuels's next work.

On Saturday mornings, Radio 4 handily segments the world: after Asiafile has ended and before Eurofile resumes comes the debut of **The Americas File**, a new foreign affairs series presented by the BBC Washington Correspondent Bridget Kendall. It got off to a strong start last week with interesting reports on the region's nodal point, Panama, about to resume control of the canal, and Miami, where the black population is complaining about Hispanic dominance, alleging discrimination against non-Spanish-speakers. The programme ended with a challenging piece about the stereotyping implicit in the notion of "machismo" — as if sexism were the preserve of Latin men. Kendall mixed evocative description with sharp questioning, even if her final quip about machismo swiftly reinstated the offending stereotype.

We're now three **Reith Lectures** (Radio 4) down, two to go. Patricia Williams is still following exasperatingly dense stretches with passages of pellucid lyricism and crisp wit. Last week she produced a marvellous analysis of the OJ Simpson business, arguing that both blacks and whites claimed him (absurdly) as a representative of all black defendants, and spoke revealingly about cultural tourism in Harlem. This week she looked at the way in which racism in the United States hides beneath class prejudice. She recounted how, applying for a mortgage for a house in a white area, the bank tried to get her to pay more when they discovered that she was black, on account of the fact that property prices in the area were falling. Why? Because she was moving in; her existence endangered her collateral. In her eloquent use of personal anecdote, Williams sounds strikingly like another radio essayist from America — Alistair Cooke.

Finally, less than a week after taking part in a Radio 5 Live phone-in, John Major was back on a Talk Radio one (has he nothing else to do?). But this yielded much more hostile questioners and in Scott Chisholm a less compliant presenter. You could gauge Major's testiness by the number of times he said "with respect" or (even more spikily) "with great respect". But he promised to do a lot more such programmes in the future.

Mansun.

·ATTACK OF THE GREY LANTERN·

'MANSUN'S DEBUT ALBUM BOASTS A BREADTH, SCOPE AND SHEER AMBITION UNMATCHED BY ANY OTHER POST-OASIS BRITROCK BAND' *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*

'A BOLD, FULLY-COCKED AND DOWNRIGHT MATURE DEBUT' *VOX*

'DISPLAYS MORE INVENTION IN THREE MINUTES THAN MOST BANDS MANAGE IN A LIFETIME' *DAILY EXPRESS*

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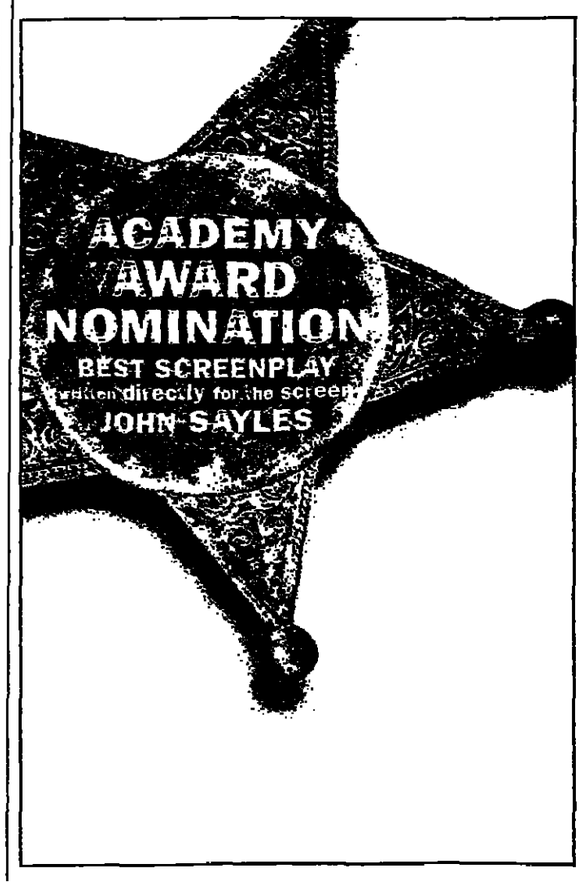

Cricket

S Africa v Australia: second Test, first day

Gillespie's pay-off line

Paul Weaver in Port Elizabeth

SOUTH AFRICA appear to have been guided towards this putative world cricket title bout against Australia by one of those cunning boxing managers who works a big pay-day for a no-hoper against the champion.

So far they have resembled Dame Frank Bruno against Mike Tyson. At the delightful St George's Park here yesterday they were bowled out for 209 in 74.4 overs and Australia were a painstaking 10 for one at the close.

It might have been worse for South Africa: they were 22 for four, then 95 for seven, before they were partly restored by Brian McMillan and Dave Richardson, who added 85 for the eighth wicket. Jason Gillespie, the South Australia fast bowler, finished with five for 54, the best figures of his brief international career, and there were three for Shane Warne.

The one consolation for South Africa is the knowledge that batting is not going to be easy on this bouncy, uneven surface. Bob Woolmer, their coach, set par at 240 or 250, and Australia must bat last.

South Africa, however, were desperately disappointing, as they had been in Johannesburg. If they really are the second-best side in the world, then the world is in a mess.

It is three years since they played back-to-back series against Australia, drawing 1–1 on each occasion. Since then they have lost players of the calibre of Wessels, De Villiers and Matthews and with them, one senses, much of their heroic heart.

Yesterday's toss was more important than usual at benign St George's, South Africa's oldest Test venue. This is not a truly fast pitch but there has been more bounce than most people can remember and Mark Taylor's decision to bowl was immediately vindicated.

South Africa's batsmen, looking limited in technique, were surprised by the aggressive rhythm of Gillespie, who had taken only four wickets in his previous three Tests at 46 apiece. Gillespie and Glenn McGrath bowled round the wicket to Gary Kirsten and the left-hander, who relishes space outside the off-stump, was almost strokeless. He became the first of four South Africans to fail to score when, in the sixth over, he could only fend at a lifting delivery from Gillespie and Matthew Hayden took the catch at short-leg.

Jacques Kallis, who also departed runless, was caught at leg-gully off the same bowler in the 10th over and then Adam Bacher played a loose shot to be caught at gully off McGrath. Hansie Cronje was fourth out when he played on with the score on 22.

Daryll Cullinan and Herschelle Gibbs, who equalled his Test highest score of 31, then took their side tantalisingly close to recovery before both were out playing loose shots. It must be difficult for young batsmen like Kallis, Bacher and Gibbs when the experienced players around them look so vulnerable.

Not for the first time McMillan looked the best organised of their batsmen. He played for a little over three hours before pulling Warne to deep square-leg for a fine 55. Richardson, who had scored an unbeaten 72 in Johannesburg, struck Warne for a splendid six over long-on on his way to 47.

SOUTH AFRICA

First innings

G Kirsten c Hayden b Gillespie	0
A Bacher c Elliott b McGrath	11
J Kallis c Blewett b Gillespie	0
D Cullinan c Warne b Gillespie	34
*H Cronje b McGrath	0
H Gibbs b Gillespie	31
B McMillan c S Waugh b Warne	55
S Pollock lbw b Gillespie	0
D Richardson c McGrath b Warne	47
A Donald c and b Warne	9
P Adams not out	5
Extras (b8, lb8, w1)	17
Total (74.4 overs)	209

Fall of wickets: 13, 17, 21, 22, 70, 95, 95, 180, 204.

Bowling: McGrath 22–7–66–2, Gillespie 23–10–54–5 (1w), Warne 23.4–5–62–3, Blewett 4–2–3–0, Bevan 2–0–8–0.

AUSTRALIA

First innings

M Hayden c Cullinan b Pollock	0
*M Taylor not out	7
M Elliott not out	1
Extras (lb2)	2
Total (for 1)	10

Fall of wicket: 1.

To bat: M Waugh, S Waugh, G Blewett, M Bevan, I Healy, S Warne, J Gillespie, G McGrath.

Bowling: Donald 5–2–3–0, Pollock 4–2–2–1, Adams 2–0–2–0, McMillan 2–0–2–0.

For crying out loud . . . Jason Gillespie took five wickets but had this appeal against Adam Bacher rejected MIKE HUTCHINGS

Hooper halts Kumble crumble

Avidesh Persaud in Port-of-Spain

WEST INDIES were made to work hard for their runs by India on a recently relaid Queen's Park pitch yesterday on the first day of the second Test. At tea, having elected to bat, they were 140 for four from 53 overs.

The start of the innings was a curious mix. From the Northern Range end Prasad, fighting a sore ankle, was profligate, over-pitching in a four-over spell that cost 24. Williams collected four boundaries with relish. But from the Pavilion end Kuruvilla, the 6ft 6in beanpole from Bombay, was a model of line and length on a slowish pitch that offered regular movement off the seam.

Kuruvilla is military medium, as would befit someone with his guardsman-like posture, but he does get bounce. He beat Campbell three times with lifting deliveries outside the off stump and his opening spell, as tidy as an Indian temple, read 9–6–5–0.

Kumble was brought on after only eight overs to restore some order. In his first two overs he dismissed both openers, Williams to a sharp bat-pad catch at silly point and Campbell taken at extra cover off a leading edge. It was skilful bowling on a pitch that turned a little from the first session.

Lara looked under the weather and batted with a semi-permanent grimace. His stroke play was often chancy, as no doubt his driving had been when he crashed his red BMW on Wednesday. Driving negligently at Joshi, who came round the wicket, he was expertly caught low at slip.

Chanderpaul's innings was hardly less scratchy before it was ended by a good off-cutter from Prasad. But Hooper stood firm, continuing his rich run of form.

● Tony Pigott's reform movement has picked up pace with the election of Robin Marlar, the former county captain and Sunday Times cricket correspondent, and Dick Holste, Pigott's benefit treasurer, to the Sussex committee.

Golf

Olazabal in contention

Michael Britten in Lisbon

VICTORY in only the second tournament of his comeback is the remarkable possibility for Jose-Maria Olazabal after a second round of 67 in the Portuguese Open yesterday.

The former Masters champion, 12th in Dubai two weeks ago in his first event after an 18-month absence, will start the third round at Aroeira sharing eighth place and, if he continues to produce strokes like the one that propelled him into contention, the bookmakers he chided for making him title favourite will have the last laugh.

Olazabal's eagle three at the 515-yard 15th resulted from a perfectly positioned drive and an imperious one-iron that flew arrow-straight to a narrow green guarded by a lake on one side and a deep bunker on the other. The distance was 232 yards and Olazabal struck his ball to within two feet of the flag.

A fourth birdie at the 17th with his third putt of 15 feet had him exclaiming, "It is lovely to be back. I missed the competition a lot when I couldn't play and it is a long time since I hit a shot like that. Now I would love to be 100 per cent fit. Then I really would be a happy man."

The Spaniard still has a five-stroke leeway to make up on the leader Michael Jonzon, whose 65 gave him a two-shot advantage over the Australians Wayne Riley and Peter O'Malley. England's Paul Broadhurst and Van Phillips are at nine under, while Mark James and the Italian Silvio Grappasonni are the other players ahead of him.

The 24-year-old Jonzon, runner-up for the Dutch Open two years ago, claimed seven birdies, while the defending champion Riley had eight in his 68.

Sam Torrance clipped 11 shots off his opening 81 but missed the cut for the third time in four starts and confessed: "I am overweight, not fit and not happy with myself. I am eating too much and drinking too much." The Ryder Cup captain Severiano Ballesteros also departed — his fourth failure in a row this season.

● The European tour has once more had to apologise for the condition of one of its courses. Players have been told there will be no fixed penalties imposed on anybody wishing to withdraw from next week's Turespana Masters at Maspalomas, in Gran Canaria, where seven of the greens have been damaged by fertiliser scorching. Seven months ago the Tour was again embarrassed when the British Masters at Collingtree Park in Northampton was marred by diseased greens.

Montgomerie left stranded by a Florida downpour

COLIN MONTGOMERIE was left high and dry when heavy rain forced the postponement of the second round of the Honda Classic at Coral Springs in Florida. Although the greens and bunkers drained well, the rain flooded the fairways at the TPC at Heron Bay, and the course was declared unplayable.

The PGA Tour has not yet determined whether the tournament will be played to a full 72 holes or cut to 54.

Britain's Montgomerie, who shot a superb four-under-par first round of 68, was left stranded one shot behind the leaders Lee Janzen and Paul Stankowski, both of the United States.

Despite a strong wind during the first round, scores were higher than expected. "There's more to this course than we first thought," Montgomerie said. "Suddenly the pins were tucked away and we were playing in tournament conditions. It was tough out there.

"I don't mind it blowing. In fact, what that does is take away the 63s and 62s. But it doesn't stop people from scoring 67s and 68s."

Uttoxeter card with guide to the form

12.45 Tellicherry
1.15 Thursday Night
1.50 LORD GYLLENE (nap)
2.25 Ivy House
3.00 Disco de Mottes
3.30 Moving Out
4.05 Rangitikei

Channel 4

2.25 BET WITH THE TOTE NOVICES' HANDICAP CHASE FINAL 3m 2f £14,070

401	1/040-14	KAMIKAZE (36) (BF) K Bailey 7-11-10	C O'Dwyer ★
402	263F41	MR PICKPOCKET (20) Miss H Knight 9-11-6	J F Titley
403	4-2U112	IVY HOUSE (28) J O'Neill 9-11-0	R McGrath (5)

Lingfield

2.10 Hangover
2.40 Cheerful Aspect
3.10 Buckland Lad
3.45 Rachael's Owen
4.15 Normarange
4.45 Red Lighter
5.15 Express Again

Going: Good to soft. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing

2.10 RUBY CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' SELLING HANDICAP CHASE 2m 4f 110yds £2,248

1	51P51F	OPAL'S TENSPOT (11) J Bradley 10-11-10	L Aspell
2	P4-3P53	HANGOVER (18) R Lee 11-11-5	P Henley
3	5-05066	MADAM ROSE (26) J Mullins 7-10-12	David Turner (7)
4	P-585	FATTASH (201) P Mooney 5-10-12	S Ryan ★
5	FP054/–	RISEUPWILLIEREILLY (1214) D Bassett 11-10-12	W Greatrex (7)
6	FP0465	FULL SHILLING (17) D Williams 8-10-12	D J Kavanagh ★

TOP FORM TIPS: Hangover 8, Opal's Tenspot 7

Betting: Evens Opal's Tenspot, 2-1 Hangover, 8-1 Riseupwilliereilly, 10-1 Full Shilling, 12-1 Madam Rose, 20-1 Fattash. 6 runners

2.40 GUILD VENTURE DIAMOND NOVICE HURDLE 2m 3f 110yds £3,401

1	51-2131	SPLENDID THYNE (16) (C) T Casey 5-12-0	M A Fitzgerald
2	45P	CHARLIE'S FOLLY (31) S De Haan 5-11-2	G Upton
3	02	CHEEKY CHARLIE (12) J Pitch-Heyes 5-11-2	P Henley (3)
4	F/2-	COOL SPOT (488) G Enright 9-11-2	J R Kavanagh
5	32	EAU DE COLOGNE (31) Mrs L Richards 5-11-2	M Richards

Newcastle

2.15 Gospel Song
2.50 Dual Image
3.20 Leading Prospect
3.55 Whispering Steel
4.25 Brighter Shade
4.55 Here Comes Herbie

Going: Good to firm. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest NH outing

Results

FAKENHAM

SOUTHWELL

FOLKESTONE

هكذا من الأصل

Rugby League

Wigan chief cleared of bogus deal

Nick Varley

THE Wigan chairman Jack Robinson was yesterday cleared of perverting the course of justice after a court case which highlighted the depth of division and financial uncertainty at the club.

A jury at Bolton Crown Court took almost four hours to find him not guilty of trying to set up the bogus transfer of the Great Britain prop Neil Cowie in an attempt to create a libel case against a local newspaper potentially worth thousands of pounds.

Robinson admitted calling the chief executive of Leeds to try to persuade him to pretend to buy Cowie but he blamed the idea on the former fellow director John Martin, whose £250,000 investment the club needed and whom Robinson wanted to keep happy.

"Justice has been done," said Robinson. "I would like to thank my QC. I would also like to thank my family who have supported me over the past few months and all my genuine friends.

"I would like to thank the Wigan supporters, who have telephoned me and sent me letters and said 'give it your best shot'. I really appreciate that."

David Bradshaw, the chief executive of Wigan Warriors, on behalf of fellow directors Arthur Thomas and Tom Rathbone, said: "The club has been right behind the chairman throughout this difficult 12-month period. It was always felt that the legal action was ill-conceived.

"The pressure he has been under has been immense: coping with his own business commitments, his commitment to this club as chairman and dealing with the case.

"We sincerely hope this is now the end of a very difficult chapter in the club's history.

"We hope Jack will spend the weekend with his family and leave us to run the shop for a couple of weeks while he recovers his strength.

"However, we hope all supporters with the best interests of the club at heart will be there on Sunday to celebrate a triumphant start to the new Super League season and that Jack will be here with us."

Raising the curtain . . . the lights went up again last night at the Odsal Stadium where the Super League opened its doors on a second season of summer rugby league with the Bradford Bulls playing host to the Wolves of Warrington PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON WILKINSON

Paul Fitzpatrick on why Super League 2 looks to France and London for credibility as a new season starts

Strine design fashioned in Paris

THE success of Paris St Germain, like that of London Broncos, is vital if Super League 2 is to maintain an appeal beyond its traditional northern heartlands.

In their first season the French club, after a deceptively successful start, finished second from bottom and ultimately owed their survival to Workington Town, who found themselves even more out of their depth.

PSG will start out, at Sheffield's Don Valley Stadium tomorrow, almost exclusively reliant on Australians and with the former Perth coach Peter Mulholland in place after his close-season recruitment drive.

It will remain that way until such players as Fabian Devecchi, Pascal Bomati, Pierre Chamorin, Pascal Jampy and Patrick Entat finish playing for their French league clubs in the south and move to the capital.

This doubling-up on fixtures last season, when the players were also turning out for France, not surprisingly left PSG looking a tired and demoralised team before the season was half over. The problem will not be as acute this time and PSG have already shown in their Silk Cut Challenge Cup games that they could prove strong defensively.

An overwhelming reliance on Australian players is not ideal for a sport attempting, against considerable odds, to raise its profile in France, where the media and rugby union are formidable adversaries. In the short term, however, it may prove a successful policy since it is essential that PSG gain credibility by winning the bulk of their home games.

An encouraging aspect of PSG's first season was an average crowd of more than 8,000, although spectators were, admittedly, let in free. But with two home games being played in the league strongholds of Narbonne and Biarritz, PSG are confident of maintaining their appeal.

PSG will receive healthy respect from Phil Larder, the Sheffield Eagles' new coach. "They are a hungry squad and one of the best defensive teams I have seen so far. In their two Cup games in England they have conceded only one try."

Like London Broncos, most of PSG's pre-season training has taken place in Queensland. Now the players are in Paris and eager to put down roots; most of them are even taking French lessons.

The champions St Helens, who open their campaign against the Broncos at The Stoop tomorrow evening, are confident they will soon sign Warrington's Iestyn Harris. They have pursued Harris, who was omitted from the Wolves' side at Bradford last night, since he was put on transfer at £1.35 million last year but they have not been able to agree a figure.

Harris, the Wales and Great Britain back, has been single-minded in his determination to join Saints, and David Howes, the club's chief executive, now believes they are "closing in" on a player reported to have already agreed personal terms.

Work permit problems have delayed the arrival of Paul Koloi, Wigan Warriors' new Tongan centre. Their coach Eric Hughes, who delays naming his team to face Halifax Blue Sox, admits his squad lacks strength in depth but is far from pessimistic. "Hopefully, when everything is sorted out off the field, money will be made available because competition for places is so important," he said. "But at the moment there is a great opportunity for younger players."

Larder . . . respect for PSG

Michael Jackson, who has overcome a back injury, and Kelvin Skerrett, the former Wigan forward, are both in the Halifax squad which is at full strength, except for Daio Powell and John Brewer.

Salford Reds will be without the injured forwards Andy Platt and David Hulme for the visit of Castleford Tigers. Leeds Rhinos, beaten home and away by Oldham last season, will not name their team until this morning but Wayne Collins, their Australian hooker, is fit and will play.

A group of businessmen, reportedly led by Tim Wilby, a former player, plan to make a £250,000 cash injection to boost Hull Sharks' bid for Super League. The First Division club's new backers will be unveiled next week.

Racing

Lord Gyllene looks set for a Grand time

Chris Hawkins

STAN CLARKE, the chairman of Uttoxeter whose dynamism and cash have rejuvenated the racecourse, will be on target for a £100,000 bonus if his chaser Lord Gyllene wins the Midlands Grand National there this afternoon.

There are three stages to securing the bonus — the first being victory in the Singer and Friedlander Chase at Uttoxeter in February, which Lord Gyllene achieved; the second winning today's race and the third finishing in the first four in the Martell Grand National at Aintree next month.

Clarke, who is not short of a bob or two and something of a philanthropist, has promised to give away the bulk of the bonus if he wins, courtesy of Lord Gyllene who is currently 8-1 favourite for the Aintree marathon.

Although Lord Gyllene (1.50) has plenty of weight this afternoon he should still be hard to beat, so impressive has he been in recent races and so well has the form worked out.

His victory over the course and distance last month was gained in very fast time under 11 st 9lb, making all the running to beat Mudahim by eight lengths.

The runner-up subsequently won the Racing Post Chase at Kempton. The fourth Samlee (beaten over 26 lengths) won at Sandown next time while Flyers Nap, who was pulled-up, won at Cheltenham on Tuesday.

The form looks rock solid, therefore, and although Seven Towers, winner of the Eider Chase, McGregor The Third and Act The Wag are all smart performers receiving weight, I still expect Lord Gyllene to come out on top.

A good performance by Seven Towers should be a pointer to the prospects of Ivy House (2.25), who was second to him at Newcastle.

Ivy House reverts to novice company after taking on seasoned handicappers and aquitting himself very well — he was beaten eight lengths in the Eider with a number of useful opponents well behind.

This is an excellent Uttoxeter card, considering its proxmity to Cheltenham, and the Scottish Equitable Handicap Hurdle looks a tight, competitive event.

Thursday Night (1.15) representing Jimmy Fitzgerald, who conjured a return to form of his old veteran Uncle Ernie at the Festival, looks the value here on his second to Sassiver at Market Rasen recently. Carrying 12st, and having been off the course for seven weeks, he ran most encouragingly and that should have put him spot on now.

Elsewhere I like the look of Teatrader (4.00) at Hereford. He appeared unlucky when beaten a short-head by Highway Five at Bangor recently after being hampered.

Coome Hill will probably miss National and rest of the season

COOME HILL is unlikely to contest the Martell Grand National and may not run again this season after finishing a disappointing seventh in the Gold Cup on Thursday, *writes Chris Hawkins*.

Jill Dennis, wife of trainer Walter, explained: "Jamie Osborne said he ran a lifeless race and heard him gurgle several times.

"We are having him scoped to see if he has a respiratory infection. He's sound and has eaten up but he's not the most robust of horses and we'll probably turn him out to grass and forget the rest of the season."

This will come as a big blow to ante-post punters who had backed him down to 8–1 favourite for the National in which he looked favourably weighted with 10st 6lb.

Go Ballistic, fourth in the Gold Cup, has been confirmed as a definite Aintree contender by trainer John O'Shea and Mick Fitzgerald, successful in last year's National on Rough Quest, will take the mount.

"He'll love the trip and fast ground. With only 9st 8lb in the long handicap, he has got to take his chance," said O'Shea.

Fears that Danoli might have injured his near-fore, which he broke two years ago, when falling two out in the Gold Cup were unfounded. A spokesperson for Tom Foley's stable said: "Danoli was x-rayed but is all right. He's just a bit sore."

Hereford

2.20 Proud Image
2.55 Scottish Bambi
3.25 Added Dimension
4.00 Teatrader (nb)
4.30 Swing Quartet
5.00 Northern Singer
5.30 Sammorello

Going: Good (Good to firm in places). ★ Denotes blinkers

Wolverhampton (A.W.)

7.00 Big Bang
7.30 English Invader
8.00 Paradise Navy
8.30 Cold Steel
9.00 Featherstone Lane
9.30 Saga Hawk

Draw: No advantage. Going: Standard. ★ Denotes blinkers.
Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since latest outing

● Blinkered for the first time — HEREFORD: 2.20 Still Here; 3.25 Manolete; 5.30 Kentucky Gold. LINGFIELD: 4.45 Ewar Bold. NEWCASTLE: 2.15 Paparazzo. UTTOXETER: 3.00 Conti D'Estruval, Garryloagh. WOLVERHAMPTON: 9.00 Night Harmony.

Weekend fixtures

(3.0 unless stated)
(a-t = all-ticket)

Soccer

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa v West Ham
Blackburn v Wimbledon
Everton v Derby
Leicester v Middlesbrough
Man Utd v Sheff Wed
Newcastle v Coventry
Nottm Forest v Liverpool
Southampton v Arsenal
Tottenham v Leeds

Tomorrow
Chelsea v Sunderland (4.0)

FA VASE: Semi-finals, first leg: Banstead Ath v Whitby Tn; Guisborough Tn v N Ferriby Utd.

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE: Altrincham v Bath, Bromsgrove v Rushden & D'monds; *Halifax v Dover*; Kettering v Telford; Macclesfield v Southport; Morecambe v Farnborough; Northwich v Gateshead; Slough v Hayes; Stevenage v Hednesford; Welling v Kidderminster; Woking v Stalybridge.

UNIBOND LEAGUE: Premier Division: Accrington Stanley v Boston Utd; Alfreton Tn v Runcorn; Bamber Bridge v Marine; Bishop Auckland v Witton Alb; Buxton v Colwyn Bay; Chorley v Lancaster; Emley v Winsford Utd; Frickley v Guiseley; Knowsley v Blyth Spartans; Leek Tn v Hyde Utd; *Spennymoor v Gainsborough*. First Division: Ashton Utd v Harrogate Tn; Bradford PA v Droylsden; Eastwood Tn v Congleton Tn; Farsley Celtic v Netherfield; Gretna v Worksop Tn; Lincoln Utd v Leigh; Matlock Tn v Workington; Stocksbridge PS v Flixton; Warrington Tn v Curzon Ashton; *Whitley Bay v Atherton LR*. Tomorrow: Workington v Bradford PA.

ICIS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aylesbury v Harrow Bor; Bishop's Stortford v Purfleet; Bromley v Hitchin; Chertsey Tn v Staines; Dag & Red v Carshalton; Dulwich v St Albans; Grays v Kingstonian; Oxford C v Hendon; Sutton Utd v Enfield; Yeading v Heybridge; Yeovil v Boreham Wood. First Division: Barton Rvrs v Canvey Is; Billericay Tn v Uxbridge; Chesham Utd v Bognor Regis Tn; Hampton v Aldershot Tn; Maidenhead Utd v Basingstoke Tn; Marlow v *Croydon; Molesey v Wokingham Tn*; Thame Utd v Tooting & Mitcham Utd; Walton & Hersham v Abingdon Tn; Whyteleafe v Leyton P; Worthing v Berkhamsted Tn. Second Division: Barking v Met Police; Bracknell Tn v Collier Row & Romford; Cheshunt v Wembley; Dorking v Bedford Tn; Edgware Tn v Witham Tn; *Egham Tn v* Leighton Tn; Hemel Hempstead v Horsham; Hungerford Tn v Leatherhead; Ware v Tilbury; Wivenhoe Tn v Windsor & Eton. Third Division: Aveley v Tring Tn; Clapton v Braintree Tn; Hornchurch v Hertford Tn; *Kingsbury Tn v Harlow Tn*; Lewes v E Thurrock Utd; Northwood v Epsom & Ewell; Southall v Flackwell Heath; Wingate & Finchley v Wealdstone.

DR MARTENS LEAGUE: Premier Division: Ashford Tn v Halesowen; Burton Alb v *Chelmsford*; Cambridge C v Salisbury; Crawley Tn v Gloucester C; Gravesend & N v Nuneaton, Gresley Rvrs v Baldock Tn; Hastings v Cheltenham; Merthyr v Sittingbourne; Newport AFC v Kings Lynn; Sudbury Tn v Dorchester; Worcester C v Atherstone. Midland Division: Bedworth Utd v Hinckley Tn; Dudley Tn v *Rothwell Tn*; Evesham Utd v VS Rugby; Grantham Tn v Tamworth; Moor Gr v *Corby Tn*; Raunds Tn v Solihull Boro; Shepshed Dyn v Ilkeston Tn; Stourbridge v Bilston Tn; Sutton Coldfield Tn v RC Warwick. Southern Division: *Bashley v Weymouth*; Dartford v Yate Tn; Fareham Tn v Fisher Ath Ldn; Forest Gr v St Leonards; Havant Tn v Buckingham Tn, Margate v Newport IoW; Tonbridge Angels v Clevedon Tn; Waterlooville v Cinderford Tn; Weston-S-Mare v Fleet Tn; Witney Tn v Cirencester Tn. Tomorrow: St Leonards v Waterlooville.

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First Division: Arsenal v Crystal Palace.

S-E COUNTIES LEAGUE (11.0): First Division: Cambridge Utd v Watford; Chelsea v Arsenal; Gillingham v Charlton Ath (10.45); Leyton Orient v Ipswich; Norwich C v Millwall; Portsmouth v Fulham; Southend Utd v QPR; West Ham v Tottenham. Second Division: Colchester Utd v Brentford; Luton Tn v Bournemouth; Reading v Bristol C; Southampton v Brighton; *Swindon v Wimbledon*.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

First Division
Crystal Palace v Norwich
Grimsby v Man City
Huddersfield v Portsmouth
Ipswich v Bolton
Oldham v Wolverhampton
Port Vale v Charlton
Reading v Bradford
Sheff Utd v Oxford Utd
Southend v QPR
Swindon v Stoke
Tranmere v Barnsley

Tomorrow
West Brom v Birmingham (2.10)

Second Division
Blackpool v Preston (12.0)
Brentford v Burnley
Bury v Gillingham
Chesterfield v Wycombe
Crewe v Luton
Millwall v Bournemouth
Peterborough v Stockport
Rotherham v Notts County
Shrewsbury v Plymouth
Watford v Walsall
Wrexham v York

Tomorrow
Bristol Rovers v Bristol City (1.0)

Third Division
Barnet v Swansea
Carlisle v Hereford
Darlington v Chester
Exeter v Scunthorpe
Hartlepool v Rochdale
Hull v Brighton
Northampton v Lincoln
Scarborough v Torquay
Wigan v Cambridge Utd

Tomorrow
Leyton Orient v Fulham (12.0)

N-W COUNTIES LEAGUE: First Division: Chadderton v Trafford, Clitheroe v Blackpool Rvrs; Darwen v Nantwich Tn; Glossop NE v Salford C; Holker OB v *Burscough; Maine Rd v Eastwood Hanley*; Newcastle Tn v Mossley; Penrith v Atherton Cols; Rossendale Utd v Bootle; St Helens Tn v Kidsgrove Ath, Vauxhall GM v Prescot Cables.

FEDERATION BREWERY NORTHERN LEAGUE: First Division: Bedlington Terriers v *Dunston Fed. Crook Tn v Chester* Le Street; Durham C v Stockton; Morpeth Tn v Consett; Murton v Seaham RS; RTM Newcastle v Tow Law Tn; Shildon v W Auckland; S Shields v Billingham Syn; Whickham v Easington.

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE: Premier Division: Belper Tn v *Arnold Tn*; Brigg Tn v Hallam; Denaby Utd v *Pickering Tn*; Hatfield Main v Glasshoughton Welfare; Hucknall Tn v Pontefract Cols; Ossett Albion v Ashfield Utd; Selby Tn v Armthorpe Welfare; Sheffield v Maltby MW; Thackley v *Ossett Tn*.

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE: Premier Division: Bridport v Bristol MF; Brislington v Barnstaple Tn; Calne Tn v Mangotsfield Utd; Chard Tn v Taunton Tn; Chippenham Tn v Bridgwater Tn; Elmore v Odd *Down Ath; Tiverton Tn* v Paulton Rvrs; Westbury Utd v Bideford Tn.

LEAGUE OF WALES: Briton Ferry v Rhyl; Caernarfon Tn v Aberystwyth (2.30); Caersws v Holywell; Cemaes Bay v Newtown; Connah's Quay v Welshpool; Conwy v Ton Pentre; Ebbw Vale v Cwmbran (12.0); *Llansantffraid* v Bangor C (2.0); Porthmadog v Carmarthen Tn. Tomorrow: Inter Cable-Tel v Flint Tn.

BASS IRISH CUP: Quarter-finals: Cliftonville v Crusaders; Glentoran v Coagh Utd; Loughgall Utd v Coleraine; Omagh Tn *v Limavady Utd*.

FAI NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier Division: Finn Harps v Dundalk (7.30); Sligo Rvrs v Bray Wndrs (7.30). Tomorrow: Bohemians v Derry C (3.15); Cork C v Shelbourne (2.0); UCD v St Patricks Ath (3.15).

Tomorrow

FA WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE: National Division: Doncaster v Croydon (2.0); Millwall v Ilkeston Tn (2.0); Wembley v Southampton (2.0).

Rugby Union

FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP: France v Scotland (2.0, Parc des Princes); Wales v England (Cardiff).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Premier Division
Aberdeen v Dundee Utd
Hearts v Hibernian
Kilmarnock v Motherwell
Raith v Dunfermline

Tomorrow
Celtic v Rangers

SCOTTISH LEAGUE

First Division
Airdrie v Falkirk
Clydebank v Partick
Dundee v St Johnstone
St Mirren v Greenock Morton
Stirling v East Fife

Second Division
Berwick v Livingston
Brechin v Clyde
Queen of South v Hamilton
Stenhousemuir v Dumbarton
Stranraer v Ayr

Third Division
Albion v Queen's Park
Cowdenbeath v Arbroath
East Stirling v Alloa
Forfar v Montrose
Inverness C Thistle v Ross County

COURAGE CLUBS CHAMPIONSHIP: *National League Two: Rugby v Rotherham* (1.0). Tomorrow: Newcastle v Nottingham. National League Three: Exeter v Morley; Harrogate v Redruth; Leeds v Lydney (12.15); Ldn Welsh v Walsall (2.30); Otley v Liverpool St Helens; Reading v Havant (2.30); Rosslyn Pk v Fylde; Wharfedale v Clifton. National League Four, North: Aspatria v Nuneaton; Hereford v Stoke-on-Trent; Lichfield v Birmingham/Solihull; Preston G v Kendal; Sandal v Worcester; Sheffield v Stourbridge; Winnington Pk v Manchester. South: Cheltenham v Newbury, Met Police v Barking; North Walsham v Plymouth; Tabard v Askeans; Weston-S-Mare v High Wycombe (1.0). Tomorrow: Camberley v Charlton Pk; Henley v Berry Hill.

INSURANCE CORPORATION LEAGUE: First Division: Blackrock Col v Shannon *(2.30); Dungannon v Old Crescent (2.30)*; Garryowen v Lansdowne (2.30); Old Belvedere v Cork Const (2.30); Old Wesley v St Mary's College (2.30); Terenure Col v Instonians (2.30); Young Munster v Ballymena (2.30). Second Division: Clontarf v Monkstown (2.30); DLSP v Bective Rngrs *(2.30); Derry v Sunday's Well (2.30)*; Dolphin v *Skerries* (2.30); Greystones v NIFC (2.30); Malone v Highfield (2.30); Wanderers v UCC (2.30).

CLUB MATCHES: Blackheath v Saracens (1.0); Oxford Univ v Waseda Univ (5.45); Preston Lodge v West Of Scotland (12.0); Orrell v Coventry; Melrose v Langholm.

Tomorrow

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE: First Division: Ebbw Vale v Dunvant (2.30).
ANGLO-WELSH: Second Division: Group D: *Bonymaen v Rotherham* (2.30).

Rugby League

NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEAGUE (2.30): Premier League: *Beverley* v Dudley Hill; Egremont v Wigan St Patricks; Mayfield v Woolston; Saddleworth v Lock Lane; West Hull v Oldham St Annes. First Division: Barrow Island v East Leeds; Eastmoor v Blackbrook; Millom v Wigan St Judes; Moldgreen v Askam; Walney Central v Thornhill. Second Division: Eccles *v Skirlaugh; Featherstone Amateur* v Dewsbury Moor; Normanton v Hull Dockers; Redhill v Ovenden; Shaw Cross v New Earswick; York Acorn v Milford.

ACADEMY: First Division: Barrow v Widnes, Huddersfield v Keighley; Oldham v Batley. Tomorrow: Leigh v Whitehaven; Rochdale v Swinton; Sheffield v Hull KR. Second Division: Hunslet v Gateshead. Tomorrow: Carlisle v York; Hemel Hempstead v Dewsbury; Prescot v Doncaster.

Tomorrow

SUPERLEAGUE: *Leeds v Oldham*; London v *St Helens* (6.35); Salford v Castleford; Sheffield v Paris (3.15); Wigan v Halifax. First Division: Featherstone v Swinton; Huddersfield v Keighley (3.30); Hull v Widnes (3.15); Wakefield v *Whitehaven (3.30)*. Second Division: Carlisle v York; Hunslet v Leigh (3.30); Prescot v Doncaster; Rochdale v Lancashire Lynx.

ACADEMY CHAMPIONSHIP: Hull v Bradford; London v St Helens; Salford v Castleford; Wakefield v Leeds; Wigan v Halifax.

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: *Derby v Manchester* (7.30); Leicester v Crystal Palace (7.30); Thames Valley v Leopards (8.0); Worthing v Hemel & Watford (8.0). Tomorrow: Birmingham v London (7.0); Chester v Sheffield (6.0); Crystal Palace v Worthing (7.0).

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Men: First Division: Bury & Bolton v Nottingham (7.30); Cardiff v Brixton (8.0); Coventry v Liverpool (7.30); Guildford v Stockton (8.0); Solent v Mid Sussex (8.0); Westminster v Plymouth (8.0). Tomorrow: Mid Sussex v *Westminster; Ware v Oxford (4.0)*. Women: First Division: Barking & Dagenham v Rhondda (8.0); Birmingham v Nottingham (4.0); Harlesden v Spelthorne (7.0); London v Crystal Palace (6.0); Thames Valley v Ipswich (5.45). Tomorrow: Sheffield v Northampton (2.0); Thames Valley v Rhondda (2.30).

Hockey

WORLD CUP QUALIFIER (Kuala Lumpur): Final: Spain v Korea.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: First Division: Beeston v Bromley (1.30), Blueharts v Bournville (2.0); Hull v Trojans (2.0); Indian Gym v Brooklands (1.30); Isca v City of Ports (12.30); Lewes v Crostyx (1.30); Oxford Hawks v Doncaster (1.30); Oxford Univ v Edgbaston (12.0), Sheffield v Firebrands (2.0); St Albans v Harleston (2.0). Stourport v Warrington (2.0). Tomorrow: Stourport v Oxford Hawks (2.30).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Edinburgh Univ v MIM; Gordonians v Grange; Inverleith v Western; Kelburne v Menzieshill, Torbrex v *Watsonians*. Tomorrow: *Grange v Edinburgh Univ*

MEN'S REGIONAL LEAGUES: North: Harrogate v Ben Rhydding, Norton v Bankers; Ramgarhia v Springfields, Southport v Formby; Swalwell v Neston; Timperley v *Chester*.

MEN'S CLUBS: Bath v Robinsons. Bath Bucs v West Wilts, Cambs C v Bedford. Cheltenham v WSM. Hampton v Stone. Llan & Llan v Whitchurch, Peterboro v Bury St Edmunds.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier Division: Clifton v *Slough* (Clifton Coll. 12.30); Doncaster v Ipswich (Bennetthorpe. 12.0); Leicester v *Trojans* (12.30); Sutton CL v Hightown (11.30). First Division: *Bradford* v Chelmsford (1.50); Olton v Canterbury (2.0); S Bedans v Bluoharts (12.30). Wimbledon v Bracknell (12.0). Second Division: Loughboro Stdts v Ealing (2.30). Old Loughtonians v St Albans (1.0); W Witney v Sherwood (12.0). Woking v Exmouth (2.0).

WOMEN'S REGIONAL LEAGUES: East: Baxleyheath v Cambs C; Harleston v *Sevenoaks; Ipswich v Ashford; WGC v Bury* St Edmunds. Midlands: Aldridge v Leicester; Bedford v Pickwick; Crimson R v W Bromwich; N Staffs v Hampton. North: Blackburn v Sheffield; Liverpool v Chester; Poynton v Walton; York v Carlisle. South: Dulwich v Reading; Horsham v Tulse Hill; Southampton v *City of Ports*; Win Hill v Winchester; Worthing v Hampstead. West: Cheltenham v St Austell; Exeter v Wimborne; Redland v Leominster; Yate v Colwall.

Tomorrow

JUBILEE OF PAKISTAN TOURNAMENT (Karachi): Pakistan v England.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier Division: Surbiton v Old Loughtonians (2.30)

HA TROPHY: Quarter-finals: Epsom v Staines; Hereford v Marlow.

AEWHA CUP: Fifth round: Chelmsford v Canterbury (12.45); Crimson R v Aldridge (2.0), Doncaster v Woking (2.0), Hightown v Trojans (12.30). Ipswich v Olton (12.0), Slough v Leicester (12.0); Sutton CL v Cheam (11.30); *Wimbledon v Clifton (1.0)*

Ice Hockey

SUPERLEAGUE PLAY-OFFS: Ayr v Newcastle (6.30); Bracknell v Nottingham (6.0); *Sheffield v Basingstoke (6.30)*. Tomorrow: Basingstoke v Sheffield (6.0); Manchester v Ayr (6.0).

PREMIER LEAGUE PLAY-OFFS: Guildford v Kingston (6.0); Swindon v Telford (6.30). Tomorrow: Kingston v Swindon (5.45). *Telford v Guildford (6.30)*.

NORTHERN PREMIER LEAGUE PLAY-OFFS: Second round: Fife v Whitley (7.0); Paisley v Blackburn (7.0). Tomorrow: Blackburn v Fife (6.0); Whitley v Paisley (6.30).

Soccer

Bradford estrange Waddle

Martin Thorpe on a transfer saga that ended yesterday in bitter stalemate

A FURIOUS Chris Waddle has told Bradford he never wants to play for them again because the club chairman Geoffrey Richmond denied him one last hurrah in the Premiership with Nottingham Forest.

It is understood that in response Richmond yesterday agreed to let Waddle leave but said Forest must pay £500,000 for the 36-year-old former England winger even though his last two moves have been free transfers.

Richmond perhaps knew Forest's answer: not interested even though Bradford wanted only £100,000 up front and £400,000 more if Waddle helped Forest stay in the Premiership.

The resultant stalemate means that, barring legal action, Waddle will not play until his Bradford contract runs out at the end of the season. Waddle had already cried off today's game at Reading saying he was "sick".

The player argues that Richmond has gone back on a gentlemen's agreement and also feels let down by Bradford after, he feels, helping raise their profile this season.

Richmond for his part argues that Waddle's written contract did not include such a get-out clause and the chairman is also upset that the approach for Waddle was allegedly done behind his back.

So how did it come to this? The saga begins at the start of the season when Waddle, desperately looking for a club, signed for Bradford on a one-month contract to see if he fancied life at Valley Parade.

The contract included two get-out clauses: he could leave within 24 hours if he was offered a manager's job or if he was wanted by a Premiership club as a player.

After a month Waddle decided to stay and agreed another contract until the end of the season which he claims he asked to be on the same terms as before.

When Forest approached him on Wednesday he therefore thought he could leave and told Forest so. But Bradford disagreed and, when Waddle and his advisors examined the contract, they saw why: the clause about being allowed to go to a Premiership club for free was missing. It is understood this was the first time Waddle or his lawyer had spotted the omission.

Waddle then argued that, in any case, there was a gentlemen's agreement to let him go if a Premiership club wanted him. Kamara, it is understood, agreed with Waddle. But Richmond, sticking to the letter of the written contract, dug his heels in.

Richmond must now decide whether to take legal action for Waddle's alleged breach of contract, while the player may be considering legal action of his own.

● There could also be bad news for Bradford in their chase for the Forest striker Jason Lee. The clubs are understood to have agreed a £350,000 fee but the player wants instead to join Charlton, where he was recently on loan and where he began his career.

Meanwhile Forest's attempt to sign the Celtic midfielder Brian O'Neil on loan for the rest of the season will have to wait until next week. Celtic stalled on the move yesterday and Forest failed to beat the noon deadline.

I'm staying, Ravanelli tells Boro

FABRIZIO Ravanelli says he wants to stay at Middlesbrough. "I have a four-year contract and I am really at home," he said, before predicting that the League Cup finalists and FA Cup semi-finalists would avoid relegation.

"This club has never won anything. If Ravanelli brings them a cup and also the title of top scorer it will be as if I had won another European Cup," he said.

Manchester United's manager Alex Ferguson was in psychological warfare mode yesterday when he said of the title: "I still think Liverpool and ourselves are in pole position. Arsenal have to beat Liverpool to have any chance."

Performance of the week: Jamie Redknapp (Liverpool), whose passing at Anfield set his team up for Monday's victory over Newcastle which narrowed the gap at the top of the Premiership to one point.

A N Other

BORN in Poplar this quick, perceptive forward did his best work on the wing and made nearly 150 league appearances for a ferrons fellowship during a stay of six years at the ground of Henry's second. He then went cherry-picking and after a brief buzz around a hive started picking teams. Until recently he was quite good at it.

Last week: Frank Clark (Crook Town, Newcastle United, Nottingham Forest).

Bournemouth demise could save Brighton

BRIGHTON could be the beneficiary if Bournemouth go out of business next week, *writes Martin Thorpe.*

The Football League are studying a plan for the Third Division's bottom team, currently Brighton, to be spared relegation to the Conference in order to keep the number of clubs in the League at 72.

The trust fund trying to save Bournemouth from liquidation say that, if they do not get £500,000 by next Thursday, when a winding-up order against the club is heard, today's game against Millwall could the club's last.

The £500,000 is needed for the trust's takeover bid to satisfy the club's receivers and Football League.

The club's receivers could sell a player, possibly the defender Ian Cox to Southampton, to help the situation.

The consortium close to taking control of Brighton are negotiating with the owners of Hove greyhound stadium to use it as a temporary home for the next three years while a new soccer stadium is built.

The former Arsenal and Leeds defender Chris Whyte has signed for Oxford until the end of the season. Garry Parker has been taken off the Leicester transfer list.

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The Guardian INTERACTIVE

Living in the fast lane . . . Jason McAteer, once nicknamed 'Engine' by his team-mates at Bolton, takes the driving seat in his Porsche DON McPHEE

Upward and highly mobile

Jill Turner braves a love-struck band of teenage girls to spend some quality time with the Liverpool defender Jason McAteer

A GAGGLE of pubescent girls are waiting for Jason McAteer outside the restaurant, a well-known haunt of the Liverpool squad down at the city's trendy Albert Dock.

They have recognised his car, not difficult as it is the only Porsche Boxster in the North-west of England. Most would-be buyers face a waiting list of six months to a year but by virtue of his position in one of the country's most famous soccer squads, McAteer was able to get in first. Liverpool players can get away without paying for parking, too. "Don't worry about it," he says with a grin, ignoring the council request to pay and display.

As he pauses to sign mini-posters of himself proferred by the doe-eyed girls, his mobile phone starts ringing. Again. The Premiership is the new monarchy and everyone wants to touch the hem of the prince's robe.

Everybody knows the 25-year-old Anfield defender whose side travel to Nottingham Forest today. Kids shout out, "Got a new car, Jase?" and the restaurant where he is lunching seems to be full of his social circle — a girl he used to fancy, the guy who gets the Liverpool boys their motors and two of his partners on and off pitch, Phil Babb and Jamie Redknapp. Phil and Jamie's mobile phones ring a lot, too.

The ability to kick a football around has opened up a parallel universe of modelling contracts, showbiz parties, appearances in pop videos and chat shows.

The unassuming Scouser from a working-class family of Irish descent finds it all a little bewildering. He rubs his forehead. "It's frightening. Five years ago when I started it was nothing like this. Footballers are like pop stars now. We went to the Brit Awards and all these pop stars like Simply Red and Cast and Kylie were coming up and wanting to talk to us whereas it should be the other way round. I was like, 'Bloody hell!' "

However, such status does not come without demands and it is only to the victor the spoils. McAteer is conscious that the league championship has eluded Liverpool since 1990. Their red rivals, Manchester United, whom they face on April 19, have been stealing all the silverware and he wants the tables turned.

McAteer, at right wing-back, is crucial to Liverpool's plans. On the pitch he dashes up and down, back and forth like an excited hound. A natural midfielder, his lust for life has occasionally got him into trouble when he forgets the defensive necessities to hare up field in instinctive pursuit of the ball. The Anfield regime has taught him to harness that boisterous energy but he has still managed three goals.

"I've learned discipline. I can't go off running where I want, like I used to. At Liverpool you do what you are told. Go up and attack, stay and defend, and know when to do which. A lot of things have been coached out of me since I've been here and I've learned so much. I'd still like to end up in the midfield, though. I've never made a secret of that. I'm at home there in the middle of things."

McAteer, nephew of boxers Pat and Les, may have had a meteoric rise — from non-league soccer to international level within three years — but at the beginning he struggled. His professional trials for Manchester United, Chester and Tranmere as a teenager were unsuccessful and his mum told him to get himself a proper career. McAteer's mum is his guiding light. When he first moved away from home he was so helpless that his then manager at Bolton, Bruce Rioch, asked her to take him back. He was slowly weaned into living by himself a day at a time. She still does his washing and makes sure he's eating properly.

At 20 he was playing football as a semi-professional for non-League Marine Reserves and working in a pub near his home in Birkenhead for £2 an hour while giving up all hopes of ever playing professional.

But his dream ticket was just in the post. Phil Neal spotted him and signed him for Bolton. He went in January 1992 for £500 and was a regular for them over the next two seasons, initially on the right wing and then in midfield. He helped them get promoted twice, scored 15 goals and was nicknamed "The Engine" because of his relentless stamina.

In 1994 he got the call up from Jack Charlton and the offer of an international cap at wing-back via his Irish grandparentage. On his mum's advice he turned down an opportunity to play for England B to join Ireland and he played in the World Cup finals in the United States.

The following year he said goodbye to Bolton and left for the club he had followed as a boy. Liverpool, who had just beaten him and his Bolton colleagues in the Coca-Cola Cup, offered £4.5 million for him to fulfil all his dreams.

Ireland wanted him, too, and in 1996 he scored for them against Macedonia after being moved into midfield by his new manager Mick McCarthy. He is confident about his international future as McCarthy has described him as the best wing-back in the Premiership.

No, it's not at all bad being Jason McAteer. "I've been in an FA Cup final, a Coca-Cola Cup final, I've been PFA All-Star player twice, I've won promotion, I've played for my country and I'm playing for the club I've always wanted to play for. Me mates say, 'How can you ever sulk or be unhappy?' It's a dream come true isn't it? Five years ago I was playing non-league football and now I have 20 caps. If it all ended tomorrow, for the last five years it's been perfect. Perfect."

Wise Mrs McAteer has already warned her son of the transience of his profession. "When people who ask me for autographs say, 'Oh, you must hate all this Jason,' I say, 'I'll hate it in 10 years time when you're not asking me.' Me mum says I'll have to learn to deal with that, with people not wanting me, 'cos it'll happen." Not quite yet, though.

'I've learned discipline. I can't go off running where I want. At Liverpool you do what you are told'

Team sheet

Aston Villa v West Ham

Villa's Steve Staunton is still struggling with an ankle injury but a happier West Ham have striker John Hartson back after a two-match ban. Portugal's Hugo Porfirio may be preferred to Ian Bishop.

Blackburn v Wimbledon

Blackburn's central defender Ian Pearce, who made only two starts in the last 16 months, could return. The Greek winger George Donis is also fit after missing two games. Centre-back Colin Hendry has a slight groin strain but is expected to play. Wimbledon's only doubt concerns striker Dean Holdsworth, who has bruised ribs.

Everton v Derby

Everton hope Terry Phelan, Claus Thomsen and Joe Parkinson will pass late fitness tests. Derby's top scorer Dean Sturridge is suspended. Tommy Johnson ineligible, Robin van der Laan and captain Igor Stimac injured, but Paul McGrath and Jacob Laursen are fit again

Leicester v Middlesbrough

Kevin Poole takes over in the Leicester goal from the American Kasey Keller, who is on World Cup duty. Phil Stamp could return to the Middlesbrough midfield because Robbie Mustoe is suspended and Emerson has an ankle injury.

Manchester U v Sheffield W

United's Ryan Giggs and Gary Pallister are fit and Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt are also back ahead of schedule, but Roy Keane is still suspended and Ronny Johnsen has a back injury. Wednesday's Regi Blinker is back after a two-match ban.

Newcastle v Coventry

Les Ferdinand still has the hamstring injury that forced him off during Newcastle's 4-3 defeat by Liverpool on Monday. Coventry's Noel Whelan is suspended and Dion Dublin could return to the forward line from central defence.

Nottm Forest v Liverpool

Pierre Van Hooydonk, Forest's £4.5million capture from Celtic, stands by for his home debut but Ian Moore from Tranmere will probably be a substitute. Liverpool should retain the team that beat Newcastle, Stan Collymore staying on the bench.

Southampton v Arsenal

The Southampton defenders Ulrich van Gobbel, who is suspended, and Jason Dodd, who has a knee injury, are unavailable, while Arsenal have a goalkeeping crisis with David Seaman and John Lukic both unfit. Vince Bartram has been recalled from his loan period at Wolves, but Lee Harper is likely to take the gloves. Up front the injured Nicolas Anelka and Paul Merson are out and Ian Wright is still suspended.

Tottenham v Leeds

Tottenham's midfielders David Howells and Allan Nielsen are both suspended. Leeds have Lucas Radebe back from a two-match ban but Rod Wallace and Lee Sharpe remain doubtful.

TOMORROW

Chelsea v Sunderland

Roberto di Matteo, rested at West Ham, returns for Chelsea but defender Frank Leboeuf is both injured and suspended. Young Irish goalkeeper Nick Colgan could get his second start.

Sunderland's Paul Stewart, out for three months with a knee injury, could return but John Mullin (neck) and Andy Melville (Achilles) are doubtful. Kim Hiaseiberg, a Danish Under-21 international signed this week from Esbjerg, stands by.

The infirm Old Firm

Patrick Glenn finds Rangers sickly and Celtic shaky before the big game tomorrow

THE feverishness with which the Irish plunder Cheltenham could be made to look like a mild attack of the vapours by the hysteria that will charge the atmosphere over Glasgow tomorrow afternoon.

Neutrals have found themselves in a diminishing minority since events conspired to give Celtic a chance of folling Rangers' attempt to equal their great rivals' record of nine successive championships. There is only one current affair in town and it has nothing to do with anarchy in Albania or pre-General Election in-fighting.

The great debate subsided when Celtic lost 2-0 at Kilmarnock on Tuesday only to be reignited when Dundee United won 2-0 at Ibrox the following night. A Celtic victory tomorrow would reduce Rangers' lead to a nerve-shredding two points.

There is anxiety everywhere and it seemed to have overtaken Tommy Burns yesterday as he delivered his press briefing. The Celtic manager is particularly concerned about the fitness of Paolo di Canio, the hugely influential Italian winger, who is trying to recover from a hamstring strain sustained during Celtic's 2-0 victory over Rangers in the Scottish Cup quarter-final nine days ago.

"He is not progressing quite as we had hoped," said Burns, "but he did manage a little training today and we'll see how it goes." In the Italian's absence, Andreas Thom would probably be marginally preferred to Simon Donnelly.

Walter Smith has been so stricken by misfortune that he went to London yesterday to buy Mark Hateley back from Queens Park Rangers — who bought him from Rangers 18 months ago — for £400,000.

The big striker was recalled to the colours after Gordon Durie was taken to hospital with suspected appendicitis on Thursday. Smith's other attackers, Erik Bo Andersen (hairline skull fracture), Seb Rozental (ankle ligaments) and Peter van Vossen (leg injury), are all unavailable.

The Rangers manager has also been in Italy trying to sign Alessandro Melli but it is unlikely the Parma forward will be secured and registered in time for tomorrow's game.

There is also growing fear at Ibrox over the fitness of Andy Goram. The goalkeeper is nursing a rib injury and he may be replaced by Andy Dibble, who was taken from Manchester City on a free transfer this week.

Rangers appear in their last three outings to have suffered a damaging loss of self-belief; Celtic's seemed to be soaring until their defeat at Kilmarnock. On a fraught afternoon whoever first recovers their nerve should have the edge.

Athletics

Devolution proposal could let in Norman

Duncan Mackay

THE beleaguered British Athletic Federation faces another major crisis if a proposal to allow area associations to negotiate their own television and sponsorship deals is passed at its annual meeting in Birmingham today.

If the proposal wins support, the AAA of England plans to withdraw its annual championships from the BAF's programme and stage it at Crystal Palace in June or August and offer coverage to the BBC. The man being lined up as the meeting director is Andy Norman, who was sacked as the BAF promotions officer three years ago after an inquiry into his conduct following the suicide of the journalist Cliff Temple.

The motion comes from the South of England Athletic Association, which is angry that the IAAF Grand Prix meeting is being moved from Crystal Palace to Sheffield.

The AAA of England is unhappy that last year the championships, which doubled as the British Olympic trials, were closed to foreigners for the first time in 117 years. It wants Norman to use his overseas contacts to attract top foreign stars.

The SEAA's controversial proposal has been strengthened by the criticism which was heaped on Channel 4 after its first attempt at covering athletics last month. "We don't want to put the sport into disarray but it gets to the point where you have to say enough is enough," said Eric Nash, the secretary of the SEAA.

The BAF Council, the sport's decision-making body, do not have to adopt the proposal even if the clubs vote for it. But, if they do not, there could be the threat of legal action from the SEAA. It is a delicate situation for Ken Rickhuss, who will take over as the BAF's caretaker chief officer when Peter Radford leaves his post as executive chairman at the end of next month. It is hoped to announce a permanent replacement in September.

Cherries fan picks wrong time

Soccer Diary

Martin Thorpe

THE life of a referee contains enough stress without some of the things that have been happening lately. For instance, you might think that one area refs could instantly rely on for support would be their own kind.

No. It turns out that the fan who ran on to the pitch to accost the referee during last month's Bury v Bournemouth game is a referee himself. Petty Officer Darren Williams of the Royal Navy is a Cherries fan who was so angry when Ian Cruickshanks declined Bournemouth a penalty that he ran on to the pitch, grabbed the ref by his shoulder and gave him a ear-bashing.

Unfortunately, Williams regularly referees navy games and other matches in his native Hampshire.

Not only was a profusely apologetic Williams found guilty of assault this week, but he has been banned from refereeing and from Dean Court.

Then there was the case of the Brazilian coach who went over the moon. Paulo Mata of the club Itaperuna was so furious at a series of decisions given against his team that he ran on to the pitch to argue with the referee, dropped his trousers and bared his buttocks.

Police forced Mata to pull his trews up again but the coach could barely disguise his anger as he was led off the pitch ranting at officials. "I went naked because I'm tired of working honestly only to be scandalously robbed," he said. "Football in Rio de Janeiro is a disgrace." Or in common parlance, a bummer.

IS IT Kilmarnock's year to win the Scottish Cup? Of the three other semi-finalists, the managers of Falkirk and Celtic, Alex Totten and Tommy Burns, both used to manage Killie while the Dundee United boss Tommy McLean played over 200 games for Kilmarnock. But if you think that is ominous ... the last time Killie won the cup was 1929, when Labour won the election pledged to electoral reform. They collapsed two years later when the leader formed a coalition with the Tories.

THAT old chestnut has risen its head again: sex before matches. The Costa Rica squad have been banned from it until after their current round of World Cup qualifiers finish on March 23. But things could have been worse. The final round of qualifiers are not until November.

THE Man was unequivocal: "Le Tissier is a very skilful player who works hard and brings more aggression to the side." Surely some mistake. No. This is Martin Cole, secretary of non-League Molesey, talking about their midfielder Darren Le Tissier, Matthew's cousin.

AN UPCOMING television documentary on Sir Matt Busby relays a steamy tale about the great man as told by the former head of Manchester police John Stalker. When Busby first arrived in the city someone asked him his occupation for the city register. But the chap with the clipboard could not understand Busby's Scottish accent so Sir Matt went down on some offical records as "Busby, M: Fruitboller".

ARE players too big for their boots? "You wouldn't believe it, but players wear boots about two sizes too small for their feet. Because after you wear a boot for a week it stretches a size and half again," says Tommy Taylor, the Leyton Orient manager. Not many people know that.

POLICING charges are even escalating in Vietnam. Two players from the Hanoi police team in Vietnam have been suspended for kicking and punching opponents in an ill-tempered match against the Army earlier this week. This follows an attack by Ho Chi Minh City police players on a referee last October.

SO, Arsenal want to buy school places for some of their YTS lads. At least they will have no trouble learning how to put their arms in the air (suggests Mike Tierney of Tottenham).

RUGBY UNION: THE FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP

All eyes will be on Jonathan Davies, Will Carling and Rob Andrew, yet it is the likes of Healey, Catt and Stimpson, argues **Robert Armstrong**, who will earn England the Triple Crown

New England to eclipse the old stagers

Wales v England

NO HOLLYWOOD scriptwriter would dare to submit the improbable scenario that makes today's shoot-out at Cardiff Arms Park one of the most riveting and unpredictable Five Nations occasions for many years. Two of Britain's greatest players, Jonathan Davies and Will Carling, are set to make their last international appearances and a third, Rob Andrew, who officially retired 18 months ago, is poised to come off the England bench and swing his golden boot once again.

As if that unlikely configuration of ageing stars were not enough, the match, which has England going for a Triple Crown, could also be Jack Rowell's last as their coach, a post he has held for nearly three years without undertaking a long-term commitment. It must also be open to doubt whether the injured Ieuan Evans, who is 33 next week, will resume his record-breaking Wales career next season.

Indeed a disruptive series of injuries has cast a long shadow over the final game to be staged at the Arms Park before the stadium is pulled down and rebuilt for the 1999 World Cup. There are 11th-hour doubts about England's Lawrence Dallaglio, who has a heavy cold. His Wasps club-mate Chris Sheasby has been drafted into the squad and Ben Clarke will take over the blind-side position should Dallaglio fail to recover.

England had already given Mike Catt the go-ahead to replace the injured Paul Grayson when Wales reluctantly conceded that Scott Gibbs and Evans would have to join Charvis, Rowley and Arwel Thomas among the non-starters. It is hardly an exaggeration to suggest that England, who have the greater strength in depth, now face a Wales A line-up.

Amid the hype over the venerable Davies, Andrew and Carling, who together muster 100 years, it is easily overlooked that both sides have promoted a bold youth policy this season. Younger men, such as England's Healey, Catt and Stimpson and the Welsh trio of Howley, Jenkins and Quinnell could have a greater influence on the game than the bunch of 30-somethings.

Rowell has insisted that England will not withdraw into a protective shell of percentage rugby after the defeat by France, while the Welsh coach Kevin Bowring, despite set-backs against Ireland and France, not to mention Australia and South Africa, has courageously persevered with the strategy that aims to expand the game under pressure.

The England coach has been castigated for putting Andrew on the bench as a substitute goal-kicker yet his more significant selection is Leicester's 23-year-old Healey at scrum-half to form a fresh partnership with Catt. If Healey, who made a startling eight-minute appearance against Ireland as a substitute, can reproduce the pace, inventiveness and support work he shows every week for his club, England may at last put together the sustained 80-minute performance that has been lacking all season.

"We have to keep playing in the style that took us into a 20-6 lead in the France game, even though we lost," the England captain Phil de Glanville said yesterday. "We stopped playing in the last 20 minutes but we would be delighted to get into the same position again in the Wales match. We will aim to play for more of the game and better than we did two weeks ago."

De Glanville acknowledged that Jenkins, Howley and the No. 8 Quinnell were the Welsh players likely to cause England most concern. The England skipper diplomatically avoided comment on Davies, possibly because the the 34-year-old fly-half — like Andrew — no longer has the necessary pace over 15 or 20 metres to unhinge an international defence. It is felt that Davies will have to unload the ball rapidly or step up his tactical kicking.

"Our discipline will have to be good, though," added de Glanville, "because Jenkins is a phenomenal goal-kicker who can give Wales three points from anywhere over halfway. Howley's pace can cause us real damage and obviously we regard Quinnell very highly because of his power and experience."

England's line-out specialists Johnson, Shaw and Rodber will also have to think and perform flexibly to counter the variations Llewellyn and Voyle are likely to use to second-guess them. Nevertheless it is difficult to see England's back row, in which the open-side Hill has become a formidable catalyst, being outgunned for pace, power or alertness.

No player will be more eager to impress than Catt, who has an unexpected opportunity to redeem his reputation as an international fly-half. The England threequarters could be in business with a vengeance if the Bath player exploits Davies' tendency to dwell on the ball and the opposition's lack of a speedy predator at open-side.

One suspects that Wales, who also have the 32-year-old Nigel Davies at centre, will discover the hard way that professional rugby at this level is no place for proud veterans seeking an enjoyable swansong. England's young Turks should have an afternoon to remember and clinch the Triple Crown.

Cardiff teams

WALES		ENGLAND	
N Jenkins (Pontypridd)	15	T Stimpson (Newcastle)	
S Hill (Cardiff)	14	J Sleightholme (Bath)	
A Bateman (Richmond)	13	W Carling (Harlequins)	
N Davies (Llanelli)	12	P de Glanville (Bath, capt)	
G Thomas (Bridgend)	11	T Underwood (Newcastle)	
J Davies (Cardiff)	10	N Catt (Bath)	
R Howley (Cardiff)	9	A Healey (Leicester)	
C Loader (Swansea)	1	G Rowntree (Leicester)	
J Humphreys (Cardiff, capt)	2	M Regan (Bristol)	
D Young (Cardiff)	3	J Leonard (Harlequins)	
G O Llewellyn (Harlequins)	4	M Johnson (Leicester)	
M Voyle (Llanelli)	5	S Shaw (Bristol)	
S Williams (Neath)	6	L Dallaglio (Wasps)	
K Jones (Ebbw Vale)	7	R Hill (Saracens)	
S Quinnell (Richmond)	8	T Rodber (Northampton)	

REPLACEMENTS: Wales W Proctor (Llanelli), P John (Pontypridd), D McIntosh (Pontypridd), C Quinnell (Richmond), S John (Llanelli), G Jenkins (Swansea).

England J Guscott (Bath), R Andrew (Newcastle), A Gomarsall (Wasps), D Garforth (Leicester), P Greening (Gloucester), B Clarke (Richmond).

Referee J Dumé (France)

Punter places single bet of £78,000 on England

THE anonymous Essex woman who telephone-bets heavily on England — £18,000 for them to beat Scotland and £46,000 for them to beat Ireland — is back with a vengeance.

Yesterday she heaped £78,000 on England to beat Wales at 3-1 on, odds which immediately shortened to 7-2 on. She stands to collect £104,000 — a profit of £26,000 which shrinks to £16,640 after deducting nine per cent betting tax.

"Given that the punter missed out the France game we are clearly dealing with a shrewd gambler," said a William Hill spokesman.

Ian Malin cannot see Scotland spoiling the Parc des Princes party

Vibrant France set for victorious end to an era

France v Scotland

THERE is a convenient symmetry about the 50th and final game at the Parc des Princes this afternoon. For it is 10 years since France have won a Grand Slam and they badly want to say *adieu* to the old stadium in style before they move to their new futuristic home, Stade de France in Paris's northern suburbs.

Scotland have come to Paris in the role of party-poopers. There are some favourable omens for l'Ecosse. In 12 attempts their one and only win at the Parc, France's home since 1973, was on their last visit two years ago when Gavin Hastings memorably steamed up on the shoulder of Gregor Townsend and planted the winning try beneath the posts in the last minute. And the Scots rediscovered their fast, expansive game a fortnight ago to blow Ireland away 38-10 on a windy day in Murrayfield.

The Scots were making all the right noises when their plane left Edinburgh on Thursday. Craig Chalmers, who will be playing his fifth international in Paris, said: "If we can go there and play the way we can as a team and not as individuals, then we can upset the Grand Slam party. They've got all the pressure on them because of the Grand Slam, and they have a new half-back partnership and a new prop.

"We're more settled after our victory over Ireland. The only way to play against the French is to attack and we'll be trying to do just that."

Brave words but, despite an extraordinary run of injuries that has decimated the French side this season, the Parc's wall of sound, which would have been the envy of Phil Spector, is likely to be heralding a French victory at around 3.30pm British time.

It is difficult to imagine another side in the Five Nations recovering from a 14-point deficit, as France did at Twickenham a fortnight ago, and emerge winners. And, although changes at half-back have disrupted France, they have seamlessly introduced players into a side unrecognisable from that which should have won the championship last year.

Thus, David Aucagne of Pau comes into the fly-half position in place of the injured Alain Penaud. The slightly built Aucagne may have the spindly legs of a Kate Moss but in his appearance as a first-half replacement against Wales a month ago he demonstrated model ball-skills so rare in English stand-offs.

Aucagne will be seeking to bring his backs into play from the first whistle. It is difficult to imagine Pierre Villepreux's France bringing in a kicking fly-half, a Jean-Patrick Lescarboura, as insurance cover as over-cautious England have with Rob Andrew.

Aucagne is partnered at half-back with Guy Accoceberry, with France resisting the temptation to move Christophe Lamaison to fly-half. Lamaison remains at centre, where he performed so brilliantly to help Brive win the European Cup final against Leicester in January.

Brive's victory and the national team's vibrant march on the Grand Slam have made it a perfect year for France. And all this after a moribund autumn when they lost two internationals against the Springboks without scoring a try.

Parc des Princes teams

FRANCE		SCOTLAND
J L Sadourny (Colomiers)	15	R Shepherd (Melrose)
L Leflamanel (Bourgoin)	14	A Stanger (Hawick)
C Lamaison (Brive)	13	A Tait (Newcastle)
S Glas (Bourgoin)	12	G Townsend (Northampton)
D Venditti (Brive)	11	K Logan (Stirling County)
D Aucagne (Pau)	10	C Chalmers (Melrose)
G Accoceberry (Bègles)	9	B Redpath (Melrose)
D Casadei (Brive)	1	T Smith (Watsonians)
M Dal Maso (Agen)	2	G Ellis (Currie)
F Tournaire (Narbonne)	3	M Stewart (Northampton)
O Merle (Montferrand)	4	D Weir (Newcastle)
N Mas (Toulouse)	5	A Reed (Wasps)
A Benazzi (Agen, capt)	6	R Wainwright (Watsons, capt)
O Magne (Dax)	7	I Smith (Moseley)
F Pelous (Dax)	8	P Walton (Newcastle)

REPLACEMENTS: France P Carbonneau (Brive), U Mola (Dax), P Bondouy (Narbonne), R Castel (Béziers), M de Rougemont (Toulon), J L Jordana (Toulouse).

Scotland: C Glasgow (Heriot's FP), D Hodge (Watsonians), G Armstrong (Newcastle), D Cronin (Wasps), P Wright (Melrose), S Brotherstone (Melrose).

Referee E Morrison (England)

Centre of attention . . . Bateman, here in the thick of the action against France last month, plays England for the first time at union today GARY M PRIOR

Bateman comes home to boost

Frank Keating on the jewel in the centre for Wales, back after six years in league

ALLAN BATEMAN was 32 nine days ago. His mature resplendence at outside-centre for Wales this season makes it hard to believe that today he will play an international against England for the first time — at rugby union, that is.

Bateman won four union caps in 1990, then joined Warrington with such suddenness that, being an unestablished name, it was scarcely noticed, except by purists. The former Neath and Wales coach Ron Waldron mourned: "Allan could prove the most crucial loss Wales has ever suffered to rugby league. He was on the point of becoming the best centre in the world."

Seven years on Waldron's lamenting prophecy is gloriously home to roost, via Australia and London. In September Bateman was signed from the crack Australian league side Cronulla by Richmond in England's Courage League Two. Richmond had stolen a march and soon every senior club was cursing. "We had signed a jewel," purrs Richmond's coach John Kingston.

Others cottoned on. By December 7 Bateman was playing for the Barbarians in the Twickenham showcase against Australia. That was eye-opener enough for Wales and the next Saturday Bateman was pulling on the red shirt at Cardiff once again to partner at centre against South Africa another returned prodigy Scott Gibbs.

The two are now copper-bottomed certainties for the Lions' tour. In particular two scintillating performances by Bateman off both front foot and back in the stirring away matches at Edinburgh and Paris had the sport's intellectuals drooling.

A modern centre must, physically, be a teak-tough man of flint and pitch. Bateman adds a highbrow stealth. He is not your cocksure and darkly combative Iberian Celt; he has more the gaunt eisteddfod scholars' face; he is a solemn one, an introvert and even, he admits, a worrypot.

On the night of his birthday last week he was not the ageing sportsman fretting about his long-term future — with Nicola and their daughter the family has already settled blissfully in leafy Surrey. England's assault on Cardiff was weighing on his mind. "Daft, isn't it, getting nervous so long before a match? It's half scary, half wonderful. I've always been a bag of nerves before any game, even for Maesteg or Neath as a kid. I just go very quiet, get three times as introverted as I usually am. Once out I'm fine, and the kick-off is liberating somehow."

> 'I'm always a bag of nerves before games, even for Maesteg or Neath as a kid'

Gibbs-and-Bateman. Suddenly roseate-eyed old men are remembering Bleddyn Williams and Jack Matthews in the centre in red . . . oomph in tandem, silk and iron, the jink and the steamhammer hand-off. Says Bateman: "If you're ultra comfortable with your partner, especially in his defence, it gives you immense confidence for your own game. I played against Scott at St Helens. I prefer him on my side all right." The pity for Wales is that Gibbs's neck injury will rule out the partnership taking toll of England this afternoon.

Maesteg is Bateman's home parish. That grand all-rounder and 1983 Lion Gwyn Evans was the shy boy's shining light. By the 1990 Welsh Cup final Bateman was playing for Neath against Bridgend. Warrington scouts came to spy on Kevin Ellis and Rowland Phillips. They did a double-take, turned a new page in their notebook and within a week it was Bateman they signed, for £100,000. He was a hospital lab's medical officer and the job and his bank balance or his rugby were each being compromised. He went like a shot and not many bothered with Waldron's lamentations.

"I enjoyed it but I wasn't the head-to-head sheer-power player you need to be at league. It improved my fitness and tackling and a sustained speed for sure but my pleasures include the elusive dart, the short stabbing dash, the cunning. I always knew I'd come back but thought it would be to help out with a junior union club."

The prince of coaches Carwyn James said years ago: "If rugby union was professional and I was entrusted with running a club, I would before anything else pay barrels in gold to secure that rarest of species — the all-round God-given natural centre three-quarter."

Richmond's Kingston is in awe he has found him: "A genuinely top-drawer gentleman with it, Allan's quiet command provides a dimension and awareness which makes everyone play to their limits around him. He conjures the time and makes the space for them. He's the pros' pro, he knows in a hectic split-second whether to close up, keep tight and regroup or move the ball on at a lick."

As Bleddyn used to say to his 1950s' Cardiff winger Haydn Morris, "Boy, I'll never give you the ball unless you'll score." Morris scored 101 tries in five seasons. It is no sacrilege to say in Wales that Bateman has Bleddyn's aura about him. Methinks it is Englishmen, not Bateman, who should be the more nervous.

Sport in brief

Cycling

The world pursuit champion Chris Boardman makes a rare British appearance in tomorrow's Porthole Grand Prix time-trial over a 21-mile course around Lake Windermere. Boardman takes on the five-time Porthole champion Gethin Butler in a time-trial he won in 1990 and 1991.

Laurent Jalabert extended his lead to 45 seconds in the Paris-Nice after he won yesterday's 113-mile sixth stage from Montelimar to Sisteron which included the climb up Mont Ventoux. Laurent Dufaux of Switzerland, who went with the Frenchman on a breakaway in the final 56 miles, was second with Spain's Santiago Blanco third.

Hockey

Ireland finished last of the 12 teams in the World Cup men's qualifying tournament in Kuala Lumpur after losing 2-1 to Belarus in the play-off to decide 11th place. South Africa were ninth after their 3-2 defeat of Switzerland.

Snooker

Stephen Hendry, winner of three of the season's first seven world ranking events, reached the semi-finals of the eighth, the Thailand Open in Bangkok, with a 5—3 win over the Republic of Ireland World Cup player Fergal O'Brien, writes Clive Everton. He now meets Nigel Bond, who beat the 19-year-old Australian Quentin Hann 5-0 in 82 minutes.

Soccer

Chicago and Miami have been selected as expansion teams in Major League Soccer and will be competing in 1998, a year earlier than planned.

Results

Rugby Union

SUPER 12: NSW 25, Canterbury 8.

Rugby League

AUSTRALIAN SUPER LEAGUE: Adelaide Rams 10, Hunter Mariners 8.
AUSTRALIAN PREMIER LEAGUE: St George 14, Manly-Warringah 18.

Golf

PORTUGUESE OPEN (Arcelra): Second round (GB/Ire unless stated): 132 M Jonzon (Swe) 67, 65. 134 W Riley (Aus) 69, 65; P O'Malley (Aus) 65, 69. 135 P Broadhurst 68, 67; V Phillips 67, 68. 136 S Grappasonni (It) 71, 65; M James 70, 66. 137 J M Olazabal (Sp) 70, 67; M A Jimenez (Sp) 69, 68. 138 R Russell 69, 69; D Hospital (Sp) 67, 71; P Affleck 69, 69; J Wade (Aus) 68, 70; M Davis 69, 69; P Lawrie 68, 70. 139 I Pelliu (Sp) 71, 68; D Borrego (Sp) 69, 70; A Huwer 71, 68; P Quinci (Switz) 70, 69; M Roe 68, 71; I Pyman 70, 69; A Cejka (Ger) 69, 70; M Hallberg (Swe) 71, 68; P Linhart (Sp) 68, 71; R Lee 71, 68. 140 I Garrido (Sp) 69, 71; M Anglert (Swe) 68, 74; J Coceres (Arg) 71, 69; M A Martin (Sp) 70, 70; A Sobrinho (Por) 67, 73; M Goggin (Aus) 71, 69; A Sandywell 70, 70; G Clark 69, 71; J Rivero (Sp) 71, 69; S Luna (Sp) 71, 69; D Chopra (Swe) 72, 68; P Mitchell 70, 70. 141 M Mouland 72, 69; P Curry 70, 71; E Romero (Arg) 72, 69; D Clarke 70, 71; G Evans 72, 69; R Boxall 70, 71. 142 S Allan (Aus) 69, 73; J M Cantizares (Sp) 69, 73; J Robson 72, 70; R Rafferty 73, 69; T Johnstone (Zim) 70, 72; J Van de Velde (Fr) 73, 69; K Tomori (Japan) 72, 70; J Bickerton 73, 69; S McAllister 71, 71; S Webster 72, 70; A Binaghi (It) 70, 72; A Canete (Arg) 69, 73; D Silva (Por) 70, 72; S Gallacher 73, 69; M McLean 71, 71. 143 S Henderson 70, 73; A Cabrera (Arg) 72, 71; A Bossert (Switz) 70, 73; F Roca (Sp) 74, 69; D Cole (Aus) 72, 71; P McGinley 72, 71; G Brand Jnr 75, 68; B May (US) 72, 71; R Claydon 71, 72; A Beal 73, 70; G Orr 71, 72; M Farry (Fr) 70, 73; M Florioli (It) 73, 70.
KENYAN OPEN (Muthaiga). Leading second-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated): 133 S Burnell 67, 66. 134 M Miller 67, 67; M Scholz (SA) 66, 68. 135 M Reale (It) 69, 66. 136 P Harrison 65, 71; H Bensdorp (Neth) 69, 67; S Daniels (SA) 66, 70; J Camaro (Arg) 66, 70. 137 M Pullan 69, 68; J Berendt (Arg) 70, 68; S Cronin 69, 68; M Shudds 68, 70; C Van der Velde (Neth) 67, 71. 139 D Jones 70, 69. 140 D R Jones 73, 67; M McGuire 72, 68; R Edwards 71, 69; L James 69, 71. 141 A Clapp 70, 71; M Litton 69, 72. 142 F Howley 73, 69; S Watson 73, 69; D Lynn 72, 70; W Guy 71, 71; P Simpson 71, 71; J Vingoe 70, 72; J Hawksworth 70, 72; A Collison 69, 73; B McColl 67, 75. 143 M Hazelden 77, 66; S Pullen 73, 70; R Dinsdale 71, 72; M Gregson 71, 72.
HONDA CLASSIC (Coral Springs, Fla): First round (US unless stated): 67 L Janzen; P Stankowski. 68 C Montgomerie (GB); B R Brown; G Kraft; P Stewart; S Appleby (Aus). 69 D Martin; M Bradley; B Lietzke; J Huston; P H Horgan; P Blackmar; G Boros; R Black; J Durant; R Alarcon (Mex). 70 T Simpson; T Byrum; B Langer (Ger); I Woosnam (GB); M McCumber; A Magee; C Beck; N Ozaki (Japan); R Gamez; D Mast. Also 76 S Lyle (GB).

Tennis

COPENHAGEN OPEN: Quarter-finals: K Kucera (Slovak) bt G Raoux (Fr) 6-4, 6-2; L Burgsmueller (Ger) bt T Carbonell (Sp) 6-4, 6-4; M Damm (Cz) bt F Fetterlein (Den) 6-4, 6-3.
CHAMPIONS' CUP (Indian Wells, Calif): Third round: T Muster (Austria) bt S Dosedel (Cz) 6-4, 6-4; M Chang (US) bt M Rosset (Switz) 6-2, 7-5; M Philippoussis (Aus) bt C Moya (Sp) 6-4, 6-3; A Berasategui (Sp) bt J Stark (US) 7-6, 6-3; B Black (Zim) bt G Kuerten (Br) 6-3, 6-3; C Pioline (Fr) bt M Larsson (Swe) 6-7, 6-2, 6-4; J Bjorkman (Swe) bt C Woodruff (US) 2-6, 7-5, 6-1; B Ulihrach (Cz) bt F Clavet (Sp) 7-5, 7-6.
EVERT CUP (Indian Wells, Calif): Semi-final: I Spirlea (Rom) bt A Sanchez Vicario (Sp) 4-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Basketball

NBA: Minnesota 92, Seattle 109; Dallas 109, Boston 107; Denver 82, Detroit 102; Golden State 101, Cleveland 95 (ot); LA Clippers 98, Phoenix 112; Sacramento 96, Toronto 103.

Bowls

BRITISH INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Ballymoney, NI): Ireland bt Wales 123-109 (Irish first): R McCune bt R Weale 23-10; M Graham bt P Rowlands 20-12; S Allen bt S Rees 20-12; S Adamson lost to J Greenslade 10-28; J Baker lost to J Price 11-21; D Corkill bt M Astley 34-19. England bt Scotland 135-113 (English first): A Allcock bt A Marshall 23-19, D Ward lost to W Wood 14-17; G Harlow bt J Muir 29-10; G A Smith lost to G Robertson 7-34; A Thomson bt R Corrie 26-17; G R Smith bt R McCulloch 34-16. Final standings: 1, England 6pts (+51 shots); 2, Ireland 2 (-5); 3, Wales 2 (-22); 4, Scotland 2 (-24).

Cricket

SECOND TEST (first day): Hamilton: New Zealand first innings 222 (B Pocock 85) v Sri Lanka.
SHEFFIELD SHIELD (second day): Sydney: Tasmania 463-7 dec (J Cox 143, M DiVenuto 65, R Ponting 84, D Boon 52). New South Wales 220-3 (M Slater 87, J Arnberger 58no). Brisbane: Queensland 277 and 194-7 (M Mott 60, S Law 50). South Australia 180 (J Siddons 82; Kasprowicz 5-64). Melbourne: Victoria 205 (S Craig 90). Western Australia 367-4 (M Hussey 124no, R Campbell 113, M Goodwin 90).

Cycling

PARIS-NICE RACE: Sixth stage (Montelimar to Sisteron, 180km): 1, L Jalabert (Fr) Once 4hr 34min 12sec; 2, L Dufaux (Switz) Festina same time; 3, S Blanco (Sp) Banesto at 1sec; 4, M Zarrabeitia (Sp) Once 3; 5, S Sunderland (Aus) GAN 1.16; 6, J Museeuw (Bel) Mapei 7, V Ekimov (Rus) US Postal; 8, P Chanteur (Fr) Casino; 9, C Moreau (Fr) Festina; 10, D Rous (Fr) Festina all st. Overall standings: 1, Jalabert 22hr 41min 10sec; 2, Dufaux at 45sec; 3, Blanco 1.03; 4, Zarrabeitia 1.31; 5, Chanteur 1.52; 6, Rous 2.14.
TIRRENO-ADRIATICO RACE (Italy): Second stage (Venetro to Pescasseroli, 131km): (Italy unless stated): 1, D Casarotto 3hr 33min 8sec; 2, R Pelillo same time; 3, B Zberg (Switz) at 2sec; 4, F Frattini; 5, V Davidenko (Rus); 6, M Gentili; 7, G Pianegonda; 8, L Leblanc (Fr) all st; 9, M Donati 15; 10, R Aldag (Ger) 2.40. Overall standings: 1, Pelillo 6hr 26min 39sec; 2, Pianegonda at 2sec; 3, Zberg 8; 4, Casarotto 15; 5, Gentili 17; 6, Frattini st.

Hockey

WORLD CUP QUALIFIER (Kuala Lumpur): Places 9-6: Malaysia 1, Canada 3. 7-8: Argentina 2, Belgium 1. 9-10: S Africa 3, Switzerland 2. 11-12: Ireland 1, Belarus 2.
HOME COUNTRIES YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS (Milton Keynes): U-18: England 11, Wales 1, Ireland 3, Scotland 1. U-16: Scotland 2, Ireland 2, England 6, Wales 0.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Boston 0, Montreal 3; Florida 5, Vancouver 4; New Jersey 8, Hartford 0; Philadelphia 5, Edmonton 4 (ot); Tampa Bay 0, NY Islanders 3; Los Angeles 2, St Louis 4.

Snooker

THAILAND OPEN (Bangkok): Quarter-final: N Bond (Eng) bt O Hann (Aus) 5-0.

Squash

AUSTRIAN OPEN (Linz): Semi-finals: Men: D Jensen (Aus) bt R Eyles (Aus) 15-10, 7-15, 11-15, 15-10, 17-15. Women: N Tippett (Aus) bt S Brind (Eng) 9-3, 9-4, 10-8; K Major (Aus) bt E Major (Aus) 9-6, 8-10, 9-0, 5-9, 9-2.

● Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, who has not won a tournament since last May, suffered a 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 defeat by Romania's Irina Spirlea in the semi-final of the Evert Cup in Indian Wells. It was the world No. 11's third consecutive victory over the No. 1 seed and guaranteed her a career-high ranking of nine in the new list published on Monday. She now meets America's Lindsay Davenport or Mary Joe Fernandez in the final.

● The defending champion and world No. 3 Michael Chang will meet Cedric Pioline of France in the quarter-finals of the Champions Cup, also in Indian Wells. Yesterday the American enjoyed a 6-2, 7-5 victory over Switzerland's Marc Rosset, the No. 13 seed.

"I just take things match by match," said Chang, "but definitely go out there with the faith that I'm going to be there on Sunday, winning the title."

Thomas Muster also reached the quarter-finals with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over the Czech Slava Dosedel. He will meet the world No. 32 Mark Philippoussis who put out the Australian Open finalist Carlos Moya 6-4, 6-3.

● The world No. 1 Steffi Graf, who has been out for over a month with a knee injury, is set to return for next month's German Open in Hamburg.

Hockey

England raw for Jubilee

Pat Rowley

IF ENGLAND avoid last place in the Jubilee of Pakistan tournament, they will have done well. They are opposed by four of the top five teams in the world and all four have picked arguably their strongest teams full of players with Olympic experience.

In contrast England, returning to international competition after a lengthy break, have taken a largely experimental side. There are just four Olympic players, only two of whom, Garcia (already on the sick list) and Luckes, are battle-hardened. There are three uncapped players in Brett Garrard, Stuart Head and Justin Pidcock and six who amass 10 caps between them.

England complained in vain about their schedule and remain the only side required to play twice on successive days: they begin with Pakistan tomorrow and Germany the next day and, after a day's rest, the Netherlands and Australia.

Jon Royce, the acting coach, is seeking "to change the way England play with much more aggressive play, especially from midfield". He considers the trip will prove thoroughly justified if three or four players emerge with world-class potential.

ENGLAND: Goal: J Lewis, D Luckes. Defenders: G Fordham, A Humphrey, S Garrard, J Wallis, W Waugh. Midfield: R Garcia (capt), S Head, J Lee, J Pidcock, S Sharpe. Attack: N Conway, B Crutchley, D Hall, M Pearn.

The big kick-off
The second season of Super League
Page 21

Glamour game
The trendy world of JasonMcAtee
Page 22

The Guardian
sport

RUGBY UNION: THE FIVE NATIONS CHAMPIONSHIP REACHES ITS CLIMAX

Carling strides towards the final whistle

Frank Keating on how the curtain is set to come down on a glittering career at Cardiff's National Stadium this afternoon

IT'S goodbye from him . . . and goodbye from him . . . Will Carling plays what must surely be his final international this afternoon, his 40th consecutive Five Nations contest for England and his 72nd in all. At 34 his senior by three years, the once glistening Welsh diamond Jonathan Davies also takes his leave of the international arena after winning his 52nd union cap, a total sandwiched between umpteen more at rugby league for Wales and Great Britain.

While Davies voices delight at the sudden chance to bob a definite farewell curtsy in front of a packed throng in the last rugby Test match to be played at the Cardiff Arms Park, the rugby world remains just slightly hesitant about being cast-iron certain of Carling's exit from the centre-stage. For he has walked this way any number of times in recent years, accompanied by heartfelt poems of remembrance and brass bands booming tunes of valediction.

Do not blink in a double-take. This piece has been written no end of times before. Today, however, for a number of reasons, it really looks as if the time has come to signal with certainty The End of the Carling Era.

Whether or not he would have been chosen, he opted out of any consideration by the Lions selectors for the summer tour to South Africa. "I just needed to get away from rugby," he says. His private life, topsy-turveyed by divorce, by you-know-who and Fleet Street for two years, is calmer now and his girlfriend is expecting their baby — another good and certain reason to back out of any limelight. Not only that, or perhaps because of it, he says "the tremendous buzz I always had in playing for England has begun to diminish; when I ran out for the match against France I was sure it would be my last match at Twickenham, but the overpowering feeling of emotion I had expected just wasn't there. It convinced me once and for all the time had come to go".

He had said roughly the same a full year ago tomorrow — on March 16, 1996, when he hobbled up to the Royal Box at Twickenham where one of you-know-who's brothers-in-law had presented him with the Millennium Trophy after England's Triple Crown and championship victory against Ireland, and he had turned to salute the acclaim from the multitude who presumed, as he did at the time, it was his final appearance at England's stronghold.

Long before that there had been no end of final postscripts hacked out to mark the end of The Carling Story. As far back as 1994, when Jack Rowell took over from Geoff Cooke as England's manager, it was assumed that Carling would be replaced, as captain anyway. A year later, of course, he was — by the RFU itself, but only for three days of high comedy.

Carling was reinstated for the World Cup but, when Jonah Lomu and his All Blacks socked it to England so spectacularly to send them packing, it was presumed that time was up for Carling and his senior lieutenants. It was, but only for the latter. So one more Five Nations at the helm, and no matter that last season in charge of a side of comparative greenhorns was probably his best and most inspiring as captain — a job he at once, and out of the blue, relinquished on his own terms.

If anything, in his maturity this international season, he has possibly played the most richly colourful and fully blossomed rugby of his career. He admits he would like to have seen his England teams be more flexible on the hoof and less predictable and, in many ways, blames himself for that. He should not. In rugby history, for all the romantics behind the touchline demanding it, very few captains have been able to throttle back a team to alter drastically the way a game itself has already distinctly decided on. The truth is that there are always more solutions than problems.

So Carling's invariable half-time pep talks, "Okay chaps, stay focused, stay positive, support each other and keep tackling," were as good as anybody else's — if not better, for his astonishing record proves it. He was captain of England 59 times, of which 44 were victories. No captain in history bettered that. All hail . . . and farewell.

Five Nations preview, page 23

End of the road . . . Will Carling at what is expected to be his last training session for England in Cardiff yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MORGAN

Centre stage: Carling's six England partners recall the experience

Bryan Barley (Wakefield) **1988**
"I first played with him on a summer tour of Australia. Simon Halliday had been alongside me in the first Test and he then went home when Will was flown out. Will was bought in for the second in Sydney. We were well beaten but what struck me was his confidence and youthful exuberance. He was sharp, confident and solid in the tackle, a good all-round centre. In the England trial earlier that year I'd been in the B team and he was in the A team. We won but he was picked ahead of me. I've never forgiven him."

John Buckton (Saracens) **1990**
"I replaced him for literally a minute at the end of the win against Australia in 1988 and played alongside him twice in Argentina 18 months later. On the field he was very forceful and had great attacking and defensive skills, the complete inside-centre. He was well-respected but somewhat private."

Phil de Glanville (Bath) **1993-1997**
"Will thrust England into the forefront of world rugby, helped by a fantastic coaching set-up. He has always led by example and his record speaks for itself."

Jeremy Guscott (Bath) 1989-1996
"His honesty in South Africa, when we were playing in the 1995 World Cup, impressed me. He said in one team talk that he realised that the captain of a team is rarely popular and that unpopularity is simply one of the responsibilities of the office . . . When all the players rallied around him in his support when Will was sacked by the RFU committee in 1995 after his famous remark about the "old farts" it was not a crusade on his behalf. The team realised what was best for the squad itself."

Simon Halliday (Bath, Harlequins) **1988-1991**
"Those early years were some of his best and in those days he led by example. The team obviously had potential but hadn't quite clicked and he was responsible for dragging out performances from other people. When Will was made captain, it made my position more volatile because Jeremy Guscott was coming up hard on the rails and you didn't have to be a rocket scientist to see what England's centre pairing was going to be. I was moved out to the wing but playing there was as good as playing alongside him in the centre. It was an era when England's players found more self-expression and he played a crtical role in that transformation."

Kevin Simms (Wasps) **1988**
"In his first game in Paris what struck me about him was his confidence. He wanted to take players on and had great belief in his own ability. I played with him for England Schools and against him when I turned out for Lancashire Schools. I met him last year and despite everything he didn't seem to have changed."

David Lacey

Peace deal solution no longer black and white

THE campaign to kick racism out of football is both noble and necessary, given the alarming evidence of those extremist elements throughout Europe who see opportunities to publicise their warped creed.

But has it been well served by the alleged racial undertones of the row between the Arsenal striker Ian Wright and Manchester United's goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel? On the contrary, some may feel that the real issues have become temporarily obscured as a result of the two incidents involving these players when the teams met at Old Trafford on November 16 and Highbury on February 19.

In each case Wright pursued a through-ball as Schmeichel advanced to meet it. In the first instance Schmeichel appeared to over-react to what seemed to be a legitimate challenge, but in the second Wright, who had been given offside, chose to follow through with both feet.

This week Martin Bodenham, who refereed the Highbury game and had already cautioned the Arsenal player, admitted that, had he seen the later challenge, Wright would probably have been sent off. That would surely have been better for all concerned.

The scenes at the end of the match, when Wright had to be restrained from confronting Schmeichel, would have been avoided, the Football Association would not have been left to ponder disciplinary action against both players and it is highly unlikely that anything more would have been heard about a police report into racist remarks alleged to have been made by Schmeichel to Wright at Old Trafford in November.

That complaint came from a member of the public and a later claim that the abuse had been repeated at Highbury was retracted. It was even alleged that Wright shouted derogatory remarks about Schmeichel's Danish nationality and might himself be charged with racism. At that point the situation seemed to be getting a little silly.

As it is, the Crown Prosecution Service has decided to take no action against Schmeichel, which is hardly surprising since not only has the goalkeeper denied the allegation but no formal complaint has been made by Wright. There, for the sake of peace and quiet, the matter ought to rest.

Yet the issue has been further confused by Graham Kelly's well-meaning but slightly gauche attempt to act as peacemaker. The FA's chief executive has written to both Wright and Schmeichel asking them to make a public statement of reconciliation "in the interests of the game as a whole".

The speed of Wright's positive response, saying he was happy to comply and that he had decided not to complain to the CPS, suggests that he would be equally happy to drop the whole business.

Schmeichel, however, is in a different position, hence Manchester United's more guarded response. It could be argued that, were their player to make the statement of reconciliation requested by Kelly, he would be admitting that there was something, on his part, which needed to be put right. Yet all along Schmeichel has protested that he has done nothing wrong.

It is difficult to envisage a neat ending to this messy, media-hyped affair. Kelly's letter to the players rightly observed that "in current circumstances a drawn-out disciplinary procedure with uncertain results would not be helpful". But he added ominously: "I want to avoid it unless you leave me no alternative."

WITH the season approaching a compelling climax, both at home and abroad, the last thing English football needs is two of its leading players facing misconduct charges based on evidence which, apart from the TV replay of Wright's challenge at Highbury, would seem to be vague in the extreme.

In those circumstances the newspapers would play the race card even if the defendants ignored it, and the game's more urgent racial issues would be obfuscated further still.

There will surely be no uglier sound this season than the booing with which some Juventus supporters greeted Andy Cole when he came off the Manchester United bench in Turin last September. An ability to read lips was hardly necessary to get that depressing message.

Sailing's historic America's Cup battered by sledgehammer

Bob Fisher

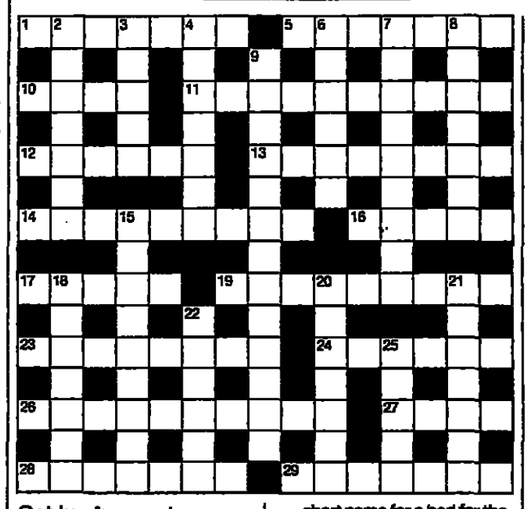
A MAORI walked into the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron in Auckland yesterday, asked the way to the America's Cup, then smashed the armour-plated glass display cabinet with a sledgehammer, battering the world's oldest sporting trophy severely in a 90-second frenzy.

Before he was arrested the man, smartly dressed in a suit, tore off his jacket to reveal a T-shirt with native slogans. "He appears to be a member of some protest group," said police.

"The Cup has been very badly beaten up," said the club's commodore John Heise. Its restoration will probably be entrusted to Garrard's of Regent Street, where it was crafted from 134oz of sterling silver by Robert Garrard, the Court silversmith, in 1848.

Sold to the Royal Yacht Squadron, it was presented in August 1851 for a race around the Isle of Wight won by the schooner yacht America. The trophy then stayed at the New York Yacht Club for 132 years until Australia II defeated Dennis Conner's Liberty 4-3 in 1983. Conner recovered the cup in 1987 for the San Diego YC, who defended it three times before losing 5-0 to Team New Zealand's Black Magic off San Diego in May 1995.

Guardian COLLINS Prize Crossword No 20,912



Set by Araucaria

Across

1 Note about bloody great pope (7)
5 See 2
10 See 11
11,10 5's work: singer of Nunc Dimittis has trouble with the same note (3,7,1,3)
12 Tooth of cat losing its last 9 (6)
13 Party for cat's victims, including one that's left home (8)
14 Lighthouse giving warning of Charybdis and Scylla? (9)
16,22 5's 12, a day between beginning and finish (5,6)
17 5's 24 has the benefit of an audience (5)
19 Who asked builder with short name for a bed for the night? (5-4)
23 Cat or racket that never arrives (8)
24 Warning to 12 from stranger turning to God? (3,3)
26 Wouldn't be so if, 'ad rode less? (6-4)
27 Require work with hands, say (4)
28 Gallery with a lap? (3,4)
29 Campaign for telepathy by river (7)

Down

2,5 Writer from Royal Naval guild worried about measure for sleep (7,7)
3 Tenor did one performance for one pound (5)
4 Withdraw the concern of the party? (7)
6 To live and live as I do with lives outside requires girders (1-5)
7 Cupid's by-blow? (4-5)
8 Puzzle no longer translated? (7)
9 The unconvertible? How idle to deny conversion (4,2,3,4)
15 Solvers' bass note in record of 5's 25 (6,3)
18 Remains of fire after housework does one a good turn (4-3)
20 Principal parts of 12 13s with third change (7)
21 12s that are no good for VHF (7)
22 See 16
25 12 request for quiet? (5)

A copy of the Collins English Dictionary will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to Guardian Crossword No 20,912, P.O. Box 180, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 OYY, or Fax 0181 957 5010 by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday March 24.

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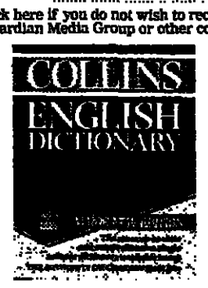

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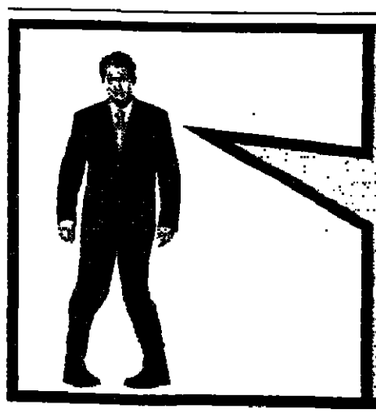

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